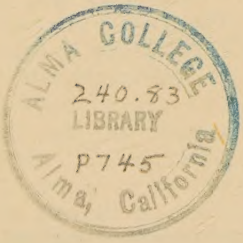
BAPTISM AND CONFIRMATION

Baptism & Confirmation

From the French of

Raoul Plus, S.J.



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INTRODUCTION

INVITED to write this little book *Baptism and Confirmation* for a new series entitled "The Sacraments," we thought it a duty not to refuse.

Nothing but the supernatural can give to our age, I do not say only salvation, but deep and lasting strength, with the power to conquer. But the key to the supernatural is Baptism, with its normal complement, Confirmation. To contribute to a real and living appreciation of these great sacraments instituted by our Saviour in order to initiate us into the divine life would perhaps help some men of goodwill to acquire a taste for supernatural realities, for those realities of which our Lord spoke so feelingly to the Samaritan woman: "If thou didst but know the gift of God."

This prospect and this hope disposed of all my hesitations. The object of the following pages is to teach—or to recall—to the members of the present generation what is their sublime destiny and how beautiful is the ideal to which we are invited by our Saviour and his Church. We have dispensed with learned erudition and critical apparatus. At the end of the volume will be found a few references for the sake of those who desire to make further research.

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CHAPTER I

THE SUPERNATURAL ORDER

THE workman who, on being asked to have his sick child baptised, replied with a sneer that it would do him little good to put salt in his mouth, may perhaps be forgiven his rudeness on account of his ignorance ; after all, he was but a poor workman. But this ignorance, we must confess with sorrow, is not confined to the working-classes. There are many of our so-called intellectuals, many of those who have completed an adequate course of secular studies, who are woefully, and in some cases culpably, ignorant of the elements of religious truth.

It is impossible to have an accurate and profound understanding of what is meant by Baptism—and its normal complement, Confirmation—without a knowledge of God's plans for the human race, as shown in the Catholic doctrine of the original elevation of man to the supernatural state.

One outstanding fact must be borne in mind. Man, in addition to his human life, is called upon to possess and, as long as he is in a state of grace, actually does possess, a supplementary life which raises him above

his nature, and which consists in a wonderful participation in the life of God.

Hence man, as God sees him, may be defined as " a soul in a body, and God in his soul." It should be noted, however, that these three elements, although united in man, are not related to each other in the same way. The union of body and soul is a substantial union; together they form one substance. The union between God and us is a union of two substances, but an accidental union.[1] It is only in this sense that we must understand the words of St Augustine: *Sicut vita corporis est anima, sic vita animae, Deus;* " Just as the soul is the life of the body, so God is the life of the soul."

Dogmatically, nothing is more certain than that the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost have a history in each one of us, a sublime and important history. " If there is one subject which ought to interest us, it is this. Nothing is more personal to ourselves, nothing more precious and important to us. The study of this subject, far from being arid and repugnant, is calculated to arouse in us unlimited gratitude, wonder, confidence and love."[2]

[1] Cf. Galtier: *L'Habitation en nous des Trois Personnes.* Beauchesne, 1928.

[2] Froget: *L'Habitation du Saint Esprit dans les âmes justes* (Lethielleux, 1898), pp. 184-185.

Either we have the faith or we have not. If we have, then with what enthusiasm ought we not to strive to understand the "gift of God," and to realise the meaning of Catholicism. This deification of our souls, which is the result of our elevation to the supernatural order, is so little appreciated; so few perceive all that it entails. "There is no man," writes an author who sometimes exaggerates, but here says nothing more than the truth, "who is not virtually a saint, called, like you or me, like St Francis or St Paul, to eternal life. This, I think, is how we ought to look at the matter. When I go to the café to read newspapers which, if they are not bad, are stupid, I look round at the people who frequent the place. I see their foolish gaiety, hear their silly jokes or their blasphemies; and I say to myself that I am there in the midst of immortal souls that know not what they are, souls made to adore the Blessed Trinity for all ages, precious as the angels; and sometimes I weep, not out of pity, but out of love, when I think that these souls, however blind they may now be, whatever appearances may seem to say to the contrary, may one day enjoy the vision of God, their ultimate end. If we only appreciated this! How ill we live up to our title of Christians. We have received the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, perhaps even Holy Orders, and yet are lacking in 'character.' There

is a deceptive form of humility which is very like ingratitude. We have been made saints by our Lord Jesus Christ, and we have not the courage to believe and to say firmly that we are saints."

St Jerome wrote very much in the same strain to St Eustochium : " You must learn a holy pride : the great Roman matrons of antiquity were only pagans ; hence you are greater even than they." So also St Leo the Great : " Christian, recognise thy dignity ; and now that thou art a partaker of the divine nature, return not to the baseness of thy former condition."

If, on the other hand, we have not the faith, at least a doctrine which promises man so wonderful a destiny is worth examining. If the Catholic Church offered to the world a religion which degraded instead of ennobling, then by all means it might be despised and left alone. To prove the truth of Catholic doctrine belongs to fundamental theology ; but at least its wonderful beauty calls for remark.

According to purely human philosophy man is a soul in a body. According to Catholic doctrine man is a soul in a body, and God in that soul. Which of the two doctrines makes man the greater, the doctrine that sees in man nothing more than man—if it does not in practice, and sometimes also in

theory, suppress the soul, man's noblest part—or Catholic doctrine, which sees in man not only that first likeness to God which is the result of natural creation, but in addition the second and infinitely more striking likeness which is added to the first as a result of supernatural creation ?

Of the two formulas : to be a man, and to be a divine man, which does man the greater honour ? For the Catholic, man is a partaker of the divine nature.

Let us enter into detail. Daily experience bids us divide the beings around us into two great categories : living and non-living. Among the latter there are three classes : plants (vegetative life), animals (sensitive life), and man (free and rational life). Are there other forms of life still higher ? Experience tells us of none. But faith teaches us that there are angels, pure spirits, whose activity is superior to ours. And we know that above all created beings there is God, in whom life is supreme.

The problem of the supernatural is this : are there beings to whom God has given in addition to the life that is theirs, a participation in a higher life, even in the highest life, the Life of God ? In other words, has God given to some beings a super-nature ? Faith answers in the affirmative ; God has done this for man. Originally he gave to man

not only his human nature, but also certain privileges which were not due to his nature, viz. freedom from suffering and death and the power to command his passions. But, more than all this, he gave him a participation in his own divine life. Not that he made us a part of himself; that were impossible; but he gave to man a participation in that action, that intimate activity which is proper to himself, by which God knows and loves himself. In heaven, in glory, the soul who has died in the state of grace will see God as God sees himself, and love God as God loves himself. In fact man possesses this power radically even here on earth, by grace. St Thomas calls grace "a participation in the life of God, that is, a transformation of man into God, and the beginning of glory in us." An authoritative commentator explains this passage as follows:

"In what does the imperfection of our present state consist? In the fact that we cannot yet see God nor enjoy the possession of him. On the other hand nothing prevents us—if God gives us the divine power to do so—from loving him as he is. Love abstracts from the presence or the absence of the loved one; love is equally real in either case. Thus, of the two acts by which God, so to speak, takes possession of himself, and which constitute his life of beatitude,

namely, contemplation and love, the one, love, can be performed by us, because it is compatible with absence from its object; the other, vision, is beyond us, and must be replaced by Faith which is the necessary preliminary to vision. Moreover, the imperfection inherent in this our present manner of knowing God gives rise to the Hope of possessing him completely. The divine life, therefore, as lived by the Christian on earth, is imperfect. But nevertheless, it is the divine life, the life of God."

As a matter of fact, all that we have, all that we are, is God's gift. St Ignatius of Loyola in the preamble to his "Spiritual Exercises" desires us to insist upon this fact, and St Margaret Mary, on the day of her profession, wrote with her own blood: "All from God, nothing from myself; all God's, nothing of my own; all for God, nothing for myself." Every atom of being is a gift of the Infinite, a gracious boon from God. "God needs nothing; nothing is wanting to the fullness of his being and his happiness. He had nothing to gain or lose by the creation of the universe" (Lacordaire: Conference 47). But among these gifts we must distinguish. Natural gifts are those which form part of the essence of a being; preternatural gifts are those which, while they are beyond the exigencies of a given creature, do not raise it to a higher order.

Supernatural gifts are those which are beyond the exigencies of all created being.

Three kinds of gifts, therefore, had been granted to our first parents: natural gifts: their body and soul; preternatural gifts: impassibility, immortality, freedom from concupiscence; and supernatural gifts: the possession of a mysterious but real participation in the life of God himself.

For the moment it is only the supernatural that interests us. How are we to explain it? "Obviously, when Jesus wanted to speak about the supernatural, he did not dream of giving a definition of nature or of speaking to us in abstract terms. The very word 'supernatural' is not scriptural. But if the word is not in the Gospels, that which it signifies is there expressed in marvellously vivid fashion. Every page of the Gospels and of the apostolic writings is full of this ineffable reality and its wonderful effects. This reality is now the friendship of God, now the divine life, now divine adoption, participation of the divine nature, divine indwelling. In a word, it is the mystery of God giving himself and making himself present to the soul, and in the very act transforming the soul itself."[1] It would be outside the scope of this little book to give a detailed explanation of this supernatural

[1] Chanvillard: *Le péché originel*, p. 10.

life promised to mankind. We must content ourselves with the merest outline.

The supernatural order means that God gives us his friendship. By nature we are God's chattels; by grace we are his friends. "I will no longer call you servants but friends" (John xv 15). And we are his friends in an unspeakably intimate degree. "Abide in my love. . . . Be ye one with me as I and the Father are one" (John xv 9).

The supernatural order means that God adopts us as his children. Human adoption is nothing but a legal fiction, having no internal effect. It cannot produce blood-relationship or make a stranger a member of the family. On the contrary, by divine adoption we are really reborn. God not only gives titles and rights, but makes us in reality of his own race. "My beloved," says St John (1 John iii 2, cf. John i 13), "we are now the sons of God." Thus we read in the Acts (xvii 28), "We are also his offspring." St Paul insists on this frequently in his epistles, for example in the Epistle to the Ephesians (i 3): "Blessed be God . . . who hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ unto himself."

The supernatural order means that God communicates his own life to us. "I am come," said our Saviour, "that they may have life, and have it more abundantly"

(John x 10). "By this hath the charity of God appeared towards us, because God hath sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we may live by him" (1 John iv 9). The conversation of Christ with the Samaritan woman is most eloquent on this subject. St Peter makes it quite clear when he says that through grace we "are made partakers of the divine nature."

But especially the supernatural order means that God comes to dwell within us. Sanctifying grace does not consist merely in a gift that God gives us, it means that the Giver himself comes within us. "If any man love me," says our Saviour, "my Father will love him, and we will come and make our abode with him" (John xiv 23.) "Know you not," St Paul asks two or three times, "that you are the temples of the Holy Ghost?"

The martyrs have shed their blood in witness to this belief. The aged Ignatius of Antioch, surnamed Theophorus, or Bearer of God, when he was arraigned before the Emperor Trajan, who insulted him, justified his surname by appealing to the words of our Lord himself. "Is it true," asked the emperor, "that you bear God within you?" "It is indeed," answered the saint, "for it is written: I will make my abode within him." St Lucy likewise: "He who lives a pure life possesses the Holy Spirit within

him." Then we have the well-known story of Leonidas, the father of Origen, who kissed the breast of his son in the cradle, "because," said he, "the Holy Trinity is there present."

We might quote innumerable texts of the Fathers and sacred writers on the subject. Suffice it to quote St Teresa: "Reflect, my children, that within us is a magnificent palace. If only we were careful to remember that we have in our souls a guest of such majesty, we should never, I am sure, be so much given up to the things of earth. . . . Some may say that nothing could be more obvious. Yet for a long time it was by no means obvious to me. I understood that I had a soul, but unfortunately I did not appreciate the dignity of that soul, nor the honour that God paid to my soul by dwelling therein. For had I known then as I know now that so great a King dwelt in the little palace of my soul, I think I should not so often have left him all alone."[1]

P. d'Argentan, a Franciscan of the seventeenth century, and author of *Heaven in the Christian Soul*, sums up this doctrine by comparing the presence of God in the soul with the presence of the Word Incarnate in the womb of the Blessed Virgin: "It is the common view of theologians, following St Thomas," he says, "that the Holy Ghost

[1] *Way of Perfection*, ch. 30.

(and together with him the other two Persons of the Blessed Trinity) is as truly given to a soul when it becomes the child of God as the Person of the Son was given to the Blessed Virgin when she received the honour of being the Mother of God in the mystery of the Incarnation." We need hardly explain that it is not the same manner of presence in each case. But the *reality* of the presence is the same. Our author then, commenting on the passage of St Paul: "The charity of God is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us" (Rom. v 5), proceeds: "Sanctifying grace, which is given to the justified soul, is not merely the favour of the Holy Ghost, it is a gift that involves also the giving of the Giver, namely, the Person of the Holy Ghost himself (together with the Father and the Son)." The conclusion, then, is clear: "What reverence therefore we should have for a soul thus filled with the Holy Ghost."

Does not this comparison with the presence of the Son of God in the womb of the Blessed Virgin throw a wonderful light upon the indwelling of the Most High in the supernaturalized soul? Does it not enable us to appreciate the splendour of this divine state?

Nevertheless, be it noted, this union of God with our soul differs, as we have said, from the union of body with soul. It differs

too from the union of the two natures, human and divine, in the Person of Jesus Christ. The result of the hypostatic union is one Person. The union of God with our soul is a lesser union and does not make God one person with us. The error of Nestorius consisted in asserting a merely accidental union between the two natures in Christ, as opposed to a substantial union. In other words he made Christ a simple Christian. In reality, the hypostatic union and the supernatural union are far from being the same. The just man is a man of God; Jesus is the God-man. But if the privileges of the Humanity of Christ are unique, those of the man in the state of grace are second only to them. Just think for a moment. The soul in the state of grace can say with truth: "This divine life in me is something real and actual, not something of the past. At this moment, if I am at peace with God, at least not in the state of mortal sin, then God lives his life within me, that is, he eternally begets his Son, and with his Son breathes the Holy Ghost. And this reality which is now present in me, it rests only with me to make unceasing and lasting, since I need have no fear that God will withdraw his presence: 'We will come and make our dwelling with him.' I have only to remain in the state of grace and avoid mortal sin, and God will remain ever within me."

" Sanctifying grace puts in our souls the very power of God, his unceasing operation, his substance. Our spiritual life is sustained, preserved and developed, thanks to the continual intervention of the divinity that lives and dwells within us as in a sanctuary. Our acts become divine acts, our thoughts and our sentiments are full of God, and all this is reckoned to our account in some sort as if God himself had done it. Could anything be more sublime? If we were only fully persuaded of this doctrine, if we had it always present to our minds, would it not provide us with a strong motive to preserve with a jealous care this sanctifying grace that produces such wonders within us? "[1]

In what does this presence of God in the soul by grace differ from his presence everywhere by reason of his immensity? Briefly the difference is this. The second is common to all beings, the first is the privilege only of some. The second is a mere presence, which may be hateful to God; the first is an indwelling and entails cordial relations: " My delight is to be with the children of men." The second is of the natural order; the first is supernatural, that is, quite beyond the exigencies of nature. The second leaves to each being only its own activity; the first associates the soul with the activity

[1] Maret: *La nature humaine et ses hautes destinées*, p. 280.

of God himself. By the second presence God gives the creature its own being; by the first God gives a participation in his own life.

These explanations must suffice for the present. The exact nature of the presence of God in the soul by grace will be further explained when, after speaking of baptism, we shall have to specify the difference between baptismal presence and Eucharistic presence.

CHAPTER II

THE FALL

We may resume the Catholic doctrine of man's destiny and his original elevation by saying that man is called to be something more than a man; by an inestimable privilege he is called to partake of a superhuman, a supernatural life, to enter into the most intimate relations with God. Man's nature itself, a union of body and soul, is already sublime; but God went further. Man will not only be endowed with the wonderful faculties of intelligence, memory, imagination, freewill; not only will he have senses and organs so complex and delicately fashioned that they are the admiration of men of science; but in the very heart of this being he will set his own divine life, like a precious pearl; he will make us partakers of his nature, entrust his own life to this frail life of ours. Of this supernatural vocation man could know nothing if it had not pleased God to communicate to him something of his own knowledge on the subject. Left to the resources of his own intellect, man knows but little of his destiny, and this very weakness of man from the psychological point of view explains and

justifies better than anything else the opportuneness of a revelation.

But after this first dogma we must now consider another. After the doctrine of the original elevation of man comes that of his Fall. Among his natural gifts was that of freedom, and God asked of him an act of this freewill, under pain of the loss of his supernatural gifts. He might disobey. He might cut himself off from God and thus lose the divine friendship, together with all the wonderful gifts bestowed upon him. On the other hand, he might remain faithful to God and thus ensure for himself and his posterity the possession of the divine inheritance.

Put to the test, the first human pair fell. As a result Paradise was closed, the divine gifts were lost. It might appear at first sight that there was little proportion between man's refusal of obedience and the loss of God's gifts. What comparison is there between the eating of the forbidden fruit and the punishment inflicted? But behind the apparent reality of the forbidden fruit there is the invisible reality of God's authority. The forbidden fruit is a small thing in itself, but it symbolises the most sublime and sacred of all religious truths: that of God's right to man's absolute obedience. "This is the whole question; the tree of the earthly paradise is nothing but the symbol of the

primeval law which makes God the sovereign Master and man his obedient and submissive subject."[1]

Doubtless, with the threefold gifts that the Creator had given him, man was in a high state of perfection. Nevertheless, however sublime a creature, he was still finite : finite in intelligence, hence he was able to err ; finite in his will, hence he was able to consent to evil. Thus in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, God says to him :

> Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell.
> Not free, what proof could they have giv'n sincere
> Of true allegiance, constant faith, or love
> Where only what they needs must do appear'd,
> Not what they would ? what praise could they receive,
> What pleasure I from such obedience paid ?
> . . . They therefore as to right belong'd
> So were created, nor can justly accuse
> Their Maker, or their making, or their fate.[2]

Philosophically speaking, therefore, man was able to sin. In what precisely did his sin consist from the psychological point of

[1] Chanvillard : *Le péché originel*, p. 134.

[2] Bk. III, 102-113. So far Milton is theologically accurate. Where he gives rein to his imagination is in making Adam sin in order not to leave Eve alone in her guilt.

view? It seems that we must seek the motive of the first sin of man, not in the revolt of the senses, but in a spiritual revolt. Original sin was a sin of pride; the rebellion of the senses came later. But this is merely to state the mystery, not to explain it. To understand it fully we need information which is not available. As Pascal wisely remarks: "We have no proper conception of Adam's glorious state, nor of the nature of sin. These things happened in a state of man different from ours, and are therefore beyond our present comprehension."[1]

But in any case this is not the chief difficulty. The principal objection of those who reject the doctrine of original sin is that such a dogma is an insult to God. This dogma, they say, "has done more to alienate man from belief in God than all the attacks of all the philosophical atheists."[2]

"How is it conceivable," asks J. J. Rousseau, "that God should create so many pure and innocent souls simply in order to unite them to guilty bodies, to make them contract moral corruption, and to condemn them all to hell?" Where, pray, did he find this in the Catholic dogma? He continues: "You claim that this system throws light on the mystery of the human heart. I will not deny it. But it certainly

[1] *Pensées*, p. 83. Ed. Giraud.
[2] Léon Denis: *Christianisme et Spiritisme.*

obscures the justice and the goodness of the Supreme Being."[1]

Michelet strikes a tragic note: "An innocent child, created expressly for hell. But what am I saying: 'innocent'? The tragedy of this system is that there is no such thing as innocence."[2] Littré, with greater calm but no less energy, writes: "Our moral sense, as well as our intelligence, refuses to believe that the descendants of Adam have been punished for Adam's sin by a Being who is credited with supreme justice and supreme goodness."[3]

We have the right, in the first place, to ask our opponents to present a true statement of Catholic doctrine and not a caricature of it: "Innocents created on purpose for hell," and so forth! A God who creates beings expressly for hell is not the God of Christianity. But passing over these distortions, be they intended or otherwise, let us answer the objection itself. After all, to quote a writer who is admittedly competent and has devoted great attention to the subject,[4] "the question is not so very obscure, nor so insoluble as it might appear. Certainly some mystery remains—in what dogma is there not some mystery?—but on the majority

[1] *Lettre à M. de Beaumont.*

[2] *Bible de l'humanité.*

[3] *Du mythe de l'arbre de vie: Philosophie positive.* Nov. 1869.

[4] Bainvel: *Nature et surnaturel*, p. 208.

of points the theological explanation is so precise and so clear, if one will only consider it fairly, that the whole mystery seems to disappear and the thing seems quite natural. The difficulty is to show in what the mystery consists, rather than to satisfy the human reason on this doctrine, although at first sight it is so disconcerting."

To begin with, no one will refuse to admit that God could, if he wished, submit man to a test. "God," says Bossuet, "gives man a command, to make him realise that he has a master; a command concerned with a sensible thing, because man is a creature of sense; an easy command, because he wished to make man's life an easy one as long as he remained innocent." Is there anything here incompatible with the attributes of God? On the contrary, God shows his goodness in two ways: by giving man the supernatural, and by giving him a reward for his faithful service. With what we may call an infinite thoughtfulness God, having raised man to the supernatural order, left him the power to work out the high destiny to which he had gratuitously called him. The test of our first parents, far from belittling God, shows forth his wonderful goodness.

But it is objected that God knew that Adam and Eve would fall and that this makes the whole thing a farce. What is the use of giving a treasure when you know that

the next moment this treasure is going to be lost ?

But does the fact that man will lose the gift almost as soon as he has received it deprive that gift of its value and the giver of his generosity ?

But, they insist, was it just to condemn the whole of humanity to the loss of these preternatural and supernatural gifts, by reason of the disobedience of one man ?

Here again we must guard against confusing reason with sentiment. In original sin there are two things to be considered: the privation of these gifts on the one hand, and the transmission of this privation on the other. Is the privation itself an injustice ? Was the divine life due to man in justice ? It was not. Then its privation was no injustice. Was the transmission of this privation an injustice ? We have in this an example of the general law of solidarity and heredity. If an ancestor in a family has failed financially we are not surprised to find that his descendants have to suffer the loss of their fortune. Joseph de Maistre calls hereditary taints "secondary original sins." Everybody admits these. Then why not admit the greatest of all original sins ?

But even granted that the justice of God remains intact, what about his goodness ? No one will deny that there is something

difficult to understand in the doctrine of original sin and the Fall. We should not forget what the Church herself says in connection with this. It is surprising that God should have allowed the Fall. But what makes up for it all is that God allowed it only in order to give everything back to us in a more glorious way. Had man never fallen, we should have been sons of God, but not through Jesus Christ. It is thanks to the Fall that we have Christ, through whom the gift of divine sonship is restored to us.[1] Hence the Church, in the Liturgy of Holy Saturday, exclaims: *O felix culpa quae talem ac tantum meruit habere Redemptorem!* "O, happy sin, that merited to have so great a Redeemer!"

We must therefore admit the possibility of original sin. In what precisely does it consist? Many difficulties arise from the sense in which the word "sin" is used here. It must not be misunderstood.

The whole reply is contained in a sentence: Original sin in Adam was an actual sin, in us it is an habitual sin. Yet even this requires further explanation.

The act committed by the head of the

[1] The preternatural gifts have not been restored to us. Even Christ willed not to be exempt from suffering and death. Tempted from within he could not be; nevertheless he submitted to being tempted by the evil suggestions of Satan.

human race was wilful disobedience in a serious matter. It was a mortal sin in the ordinary sense of the word. So much for Adam. What does it mean when we are said to be guilty of original sin? It means that the sinful act of Adam gave rise to a state, a state of privation of the supernatural, and required a punishment. Which of these three elements is transmitted to us? Not the first; the guilty act is proper to Adam alone. Not *only* the third, but the second together with it. In other words, Adam transmits human nature to us in the state in which he possesses it, that is, deprived of grace, in other words, in the state of sin.

When St Paul wrote: "in whom (i.e. in Adam) all have sinned" (Rom. v 12), he was speaking of a solidarity not of will but of nature. Adam sinned not merely as a private individual but as the head of the human race. Original sin is a family-sin, a sin of the human race.

Here is an excellent synopsis of this important question: "Adam was the head of the whole human race. His physical, preternatural, and supernatural qualities were to have been transmitted by generation. Such was the law that God had established for the transmission of primitive integrity and justice. . . .

"This wise and harmonious device for the

transmission of life, the sin of Adam caused to bring forth the fruits of death. Adam, deprived both of his preternatural and his supernatural gifts, could only generate a posterity subject to all the infirmities of nature, with a body containing in germ all the base inclinations of a being composed of flesh and spirit, all the more unworthy of being made the consort of a supernaturalised soul in that its weaknesses were the effect of a wilful sin ; they were the privation of benefits that God had intended his children to have, and which Adam had cast aside. Hence all the children of Adam are born deprived of original justice. This privation is not a personal sin, since it does not depend upon the will of the child ; it is a sin of the nature, that is, it is contrary to the divine plan by a contradiction which is the effect of the wilful sin of the first father from whom we all receive our nature."[1]

In this sense we must understand the statement of the Council of Trent that " the sin

[1] Hugueny, O.P., *Critique et catholique*. To complete this statement, let us suppose that Adam had had children before his sin ; his children who, evidently, would possess the supernatural, could have lost it only by a personal fault, which itself could not be transmitted. Nevertheless, if these in turn had had children after their personal sin, they would have transmitted to their own posterity the privation—or the state of sin—resulting from their own personal act. (St Thomas *De Malo*, q. 5, a. 4, ad 8.)

of Adam is propagated to all and becomes proper to and inherent in each."

It may be objected that Adam repented of his sin. Scripture asserts it in the Book of Wisdom (x 1-2), and the Eastern Church honours Adam and Eve with a public cult (on the Sunday before Christmas). If, as Genesis would seem to imply, Adam begot children after his conversion, how is it that, being now once again in the state of grace, he was able to transmit sin ?

It is true that after his repentance Adam received grace again ; but grace was now given back to him as a personal gift. It was no longer a quasi-property to be transmitted to the whole of the human species.[1] The reason, to quote the same author, is that " no merit of Adam could have any proportion with the restitution of grace to the whole of the human race. For this an infinite merit was required, that of the new Adam, Jesus Christ." As an individual the first man received grace again ; but individual qualities are not transmitted by generation. " A man begets a man," says St Thomas, " but a grammarian does not necessarily beget a grammarian." Despite the personal rehabilitation of Adam in respect of sanctifying grace—and the same is true of our intermediate ancestors—the common nature of man, i.e. human nature in so far as it is

[1] Cf. Billot: *Études*, 20 Jan., 1920.

propagated from father to son and from generation to generation, remained deprived of all the gifts of original justice with which God had endowed it in creating it. "There," writes Billot, "is the whole mystery of the misfortune of our birth, there is the whole explanation of the dogma with which we are concerned."

Thus we see that difficulties fall to the ground one by one as we understand the question better. Having examined the possibility of original sin, and its true nature, let us see what were its consequences.

It must first be recalled that God had endowed man with three kinds of gifts: natural, preternatural, and supernatural. Natural gifts, body and soul; supernatural gifts, a wonderful participation in the divine life; and in order that the supernatural gifts might be better harmonised with our nature God had added three privileges: immunity from suffering, from death, and from the assaults of concupiscence; these are what are called the preternatural gifts.

Original sin was committed. What was the result? As far as his nature was concerned man remained as he was, with body and soul. But the supplementary and gratuitous gifts which he possessed disappeared. Nature as such was in no way degraded, that is, if nature is considered in relation to what it

ought to be in itself; although if human nature is considered in the light of the perfection to which God's mercy had destined it, we may say that it had deteriorated, or was wounded.

Thus Christian apologists have varied their language according to the exigencies of controversy. If called upon to defend Catholic doctrine against those—Pelagius in the fifth century, and in recent times Rousseau—who exaggerated the powers of nature, they insisted upon the poverty of nature deprived of the gifts of grace. If on the other hand their opponents unduly belittled nature, then they emphasized the inherent value of our nature even though deprived of the supernatural.

Because of this difference of language—a very natural difference—Sainte-Beuve, Harnack and certain rationalists have been pleased to be witty, saying that to Bossuet's monumental work, the *History of Variations*, a chapter should be added, entitled "History of Variations in Catholic Doctrine."

The fact is that the Church has not changed her doctrine at all. If her teachers have seemed at times to speak differently, this has not been by way of contradiction, but because they naturally placed themselves at the point of view demanded by the age in which they lived and the adversaries with

whom they had to deal. Pope Pius V on the 1st October, 1567, condemned Michel du Bay, the Louvain professor, forbidding him to teach that human nature was corrupt and mutilated, that man is born evil, that he has lost his natural freedom and is incapable of any good, that so-called natural virtues are nothing but vices in disguise, and that the woes of this life would have been impossible without original sin. None the less the Church recognises that St Augustine was right to speak of the powerlessness of nature. The language of Baius appears to be that of St Augustine, but the meaning that underlies the words in each case is very different. Baius was wrong to speak of nature as corrupt, because the loss of the supernatural left nature intact; Augustine was right to speak of the corruption of nature, because in the light of the supernatural and preternatural gifts that man had lost, we are much worse off than Adam was before his fall.

One man says: "Man is born evil!" and the Church condemns him. Another says: "Man is born good," and again the Church condemns him. But obviously the point of view is not the same. It depends whether human nature is taken relatively or absolutely, philosophically or historically.

The matter is well synopsised by Chanvillard (l.c. p. 51): "The Fall of man had to be maintained against the Pelagians who

denied it ; the Church maintained it without being Protestant. The essential goodness of nature had to be defended against the gloomy pessimism of Manes and Luther ; the Church did this without being Pelagian. The Church had to use different language if she was to remain herself unchanged and to safeguard two aspects of the same truth, namely, that man is naturally good, and naturally a fallen being."[1]

When once we have understood these answers in the light of the historical circum-

[1] It is a great pity that the opponents of Catholicism are not acquainted with these truths. Many of them attribute to the Church doctrines that she in no way admits. M. Payot confuses Catholicism with Jansenism when he writes : " Our educational system is in great part derived from the Catholic thesis that human nature is essentially evil and corrupt, and that consequently education means constraint and must be founded on fear " (" Education du caractère," *Revue Philosophique*, 1899, II, 601). The Church avoids canonising human nature—as Rousseau and the naturalists do—but on the other hand she does not anathematise it—as the Jansenists do ; she recognises that nature in itself is good, but that by reason of the loss of the supernatural it is inclined to evil. Her theory of education, therefore, holds a middle course between the optimism of Rousseau in his *Emile*, where the pupil is left entirely to himself, and the pessimism of the Jansenists of Port Royal, who claim to put everything under constraint. The Church recommends the encouragement of good aspirations and the checking of evil impulses. How to combine encouragement with a salutary restraint is the chief difficulty of education.

stances in which they were given, we may gather from them a clear and exact notion of the supernatural.

Perhaps it will be admitted after these explanations that the dogma of original sin is less forbidding than it appeared. Still it must be confessed that the dogma hurts our dignity, since it forces us to the humiliating confession that there is a blot on the origins of our race. By all means, it is said, let us admit that man has been called to a super-human dignity. That is most gratifying. But to admit that this dignity was lost through a fatal weakness on the part of the father of our race is most humiliating. Thus to avoid admitting the Fall many deny man's Elevation. Hence two schools of thought.

The rationalist school places the golden age—a natural golden age, of course—not at the beginning of our race but at the end ; it is not behind us, it is ahead. Man began in the state of savagery and gradually has been perfecting himself. The very fact that our descendants will live centuries after us makes them more perfect than we are, just as we, living in the age of sleeping cars instead of the Stone Age, are more civilised than our ancestors. The rationalist school is the school of progress.

As against this we have the Catholic

position. There is no doubt that, beginning from a certain period, man has progressed, especially if we understand progress in the material sense, by the better application of science and by useful inventions. In passing, it may be noted that material progress is not everything. But this admitted progress does not contradict our dogma, which asserts that before this progress began there was a period of higher life for humanity, a "golden age" of which we find traces in the tradition of all peoples, a period, short perhaps in duration, which included the elevation of our first parents to the supernatural order and their unfortunate fall. As Chesterton humorously puts it: "Legends all say that the earth was kinder in its earliest time. There is no tradition of progress; but the whole human race has a tradition of the Fall. Amusingly enough, indeed, the very dissemination of this idea is used against its authenticity. Learned men literally say that this prehistoric calamity cannot be true because every race of mankind remembers it. I cannot keep pace with these paradoxes." (*Orthodoxy*.)

On the contrary, the Catholic doctrine that "man is a god fallen from heaven," is evidently more in keeping with the complete data of psychology and of history. In the beginning man had a sublime vocation which was followed by a tragic Fall. Hence

his obligation, in view of that Fall, painfully to rise again and with labour to progress towards a Paradise which every man with God's grace can attain, and of which God deprives none who work with good will.

Catholic doctrine is the last to neglect progress ; it is the chief object of the Church to further it, in individuals and in institutions. But she is on her guard against two errors, that of regarding material progress as the whole, or even the principle of progress, and that of considering the mere fact of lasting as a sign of perfection. Moral progress is the only progress that counts. What advantage has the two-inch gun over the arrow of the savage, if those who claim to be civilised are animated by the same hatred as the savage ? To maintain that our descendants will be better than us merely because they come after us is nothing but a dream. The leaven of progress is not time but morality, God in the life of peoples and individuals. There is no guarantee whatever of indefinite progress. History is full of painful retrogressions, and there will no doubt be others in the future, if society persists in trying to do without what alone can make for true and fruitful progress.

Which then of the two positions is the more acceptable, the Catholic, which admits an original sin—with one exception, the Immaculate Mary—and Baptism which, thanks

to the merits of Christ, restores to us our divine privileges, and makes it our duty to strive manfully to observe his commands, or the other position, which denies original sin, crediting everyone with the privilege of the Immaculate Conception and, in order to explain how these men whom they claim to be free from any original taint yet so frequently dishonour humanity by their sins, have recourse to the convenient excuse of an indefinite moral progress? Candidly, which would you choose?

CHAPTER III

THE DIVINE LIFE RESTORED

Of the two stages which we have so far considered in the history of our elevation to the supernatural order, the first is a monument to God's generosity, the second is a great disaster for man. While God by a wonder of his goodness had sought to make man greater than nature, to give him a participation in his own being, man by an act of amazing effrontery repulsed the divine advances.

In studying the problem of our origin we are inclined sometimes to lose sight of the infinite distance that separates man from God. We reason as if God and man were two persons on the same level and able to treat on equal terms; or, even though we may theoretically recognise the abyss that separates us from God, we do not "realise" its depth, and thus we lose our sense of values. Never let us forget what God is, never let us forget how small man is in relation to the Infinite.

Think of God, the most High, the three Divine Persons, immense, infinite, eternal, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,

fully content in the contemplation of their own perfections. The Father, knowing himself by an infinite act of intellect, gives eternal birth to a subsisting Person, the Word. The infinite transport of love between the Father and the Son is the third Person, the Holy Ghost ; such is the eternal, infinite life of God. All that now exists besides him was nothing. And then God created. By an act of omnipotence he filled space with all those worlds of which, on a beautiful evening, we see a small part. There are millions and millions of them ; for God does nothing by halves. Among these worlds is one small one, this Earth of ours, which in comparison with others is as nothing. On this little Earth God creates millions and millions of beings, minerals, vegetative life, animal life, and finally man. For man, we have seen, he conceived a sublime destiny. He willed to give him in addition to his human nature a participation in the nature of God himself.

Then came man's disobedience. What would God do to this insignificant being upon whom he had showered so many benefits and who had rebelled against his divine benefactor ? Would he not annihilate this creature that had scorned his choicest gifts ? Would he not at least deprive him for ever of the divine gift which with such scant ceremony he had cast away ?

On the contrary. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews represents God as full of pity for mankind. The three Divine Persons look down upon this earth and see the distress of those who dwell upon it. Human sacrifices are insufficient to make reparation for the Fall. Man's sin was human, indeed, and therefore finite, but in consideration of the infinite majesty of God it had almost an infinite malice, for which an infinite reparation alone could make compensation.

The Infinite offers himself for the task. The Word, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, says to his Father: "Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldest not: Behold I come" (Heb. x 5, 7). The acts of the Word are of infinite value; he will become "flesh" and will dwell amongst us; he will come down upon the earth and become a child of men. The sin was man's; hence he will become a man; the sin was in a sense infinite; hence, remaining God while truly man, he will make his homage to God of infinite value. Such is the dogma of the Incarnation.

Look at this child lying in a manger on the first Christmas Day. He is the Son of God. But how can such things be? Is not the Word the Wisdom of the Father? What wisdom is this, to become a little child, a little baby in a stable, a few hundred yards outside a tiny crowded village?

It is wisdom, a wisdom united with an infinite love. "God so loved the world." He loved the world to such an extent that he willed to give his only Son to us under the form of a little child.

But God did more than this. The Word was not content with becoming man. The miracle of the cradle is stupendous. But what of the miracle of the Cross? Although the slightest action of the Word made man would have been sufficient to redeem a million worlds, he willed to submit to a painful death, to being nailed to a cross in the sight of all the world, with his mother standing at his feet.

Of this there can be but one explanation: love. It is for love of me that he delivered himself to death.

And in order that the merits of his birth, his life, and his death might be applied to us, Christ during his life on earth instituted those rites which are intended to produce and increase in us the grace of God: the sacraments. Before we go on to speak of the sacrament with which we are immediately concerned, namely. baptism, by which the divine life is first given to us, we must answer two questions concerning the fact and the time of the Incarnation.

With regard to the fact itself of the Incarnation it may be asked how God came

to accept a reparation for the sins of men, while he decreed no redemption for the angels.

Like man, the angels too were submitted to a test; for God required the free service of his free creatures. What exactly that test was we do not know. It is generally believed that God showed them beforehand the Word Incarnate and required them to give him homage and adoration. If the nature of their trial is obscure, the result of it is clear enough; many remained faithful and obeyed; others, Lucifer at their head, rebelled and refused to adore the Word Incarnate, esteeming themselves superior to him, since they were pure spirits. And thus Hell was made.

But for the angels there was no redemption. Man, who is lower than the angels, was given a means—and what a means, the Incarnation and Death of the Son of God!—of regaining salvation. But to the angels none was accorded.

Why this difference in the treatment of men and angels? Why was man so favoured, while the angels were left to their everlasting fate? "What is man," asks the Psalmist, "that thou art mindful of him?"

It may be that because man is a less perfect creature than the angels God was less severe with him. Moreover, the angel

sinned without being tempted; he fell of his own accord; whereas man fell only after he had been led into sin by the tempter. This does not indeed excuse his sin; but it may have made God more inclined to be merciful. But the chief reason perhaps is that the sin of Adam affected the whole of humanity. Each angel sinned for himself, and in his sin involved no one else; the first man acted as the head of the human race, so that the loss of God's gifts in himself implied the loss of those gifts for every member of the human race for ever, unless God willed to intervene. We know that God did intervene. Can we ever realise his mercy to the full?

But, it may be asked, how is it that God waited so many centuries in order to become man? Such was the question that a catechumen of Carthage asked St Augustine: "How can it be that he whom we call the Saviour should have made men wait for him so long?"[1]

We might answer that if God so decided, he must have good reasons for his decision, even though we may not be able to understand them. If the passer-by is slow in putting his hand to his purse, is the beggar to complain and ask why he is so slow? Let us not forget in what relation we stand to God. He is All and we are nothing. We are

[1] Migne: P.L., XXXIII, 373.

inclined sometimes to think that we count for something.

But even we can see reasons which make it appear fitting that God should have kept mankind waiting for the Redemption. In the first place, may it not be that, in proportion to the whole period during which mankind is destined to exist on this earth, the time which elapsed between the Fall and the Incarnation is a relatively short one? When the world had lasted until the year A.D. 1000 men thought that the end was very near; and we still have the vague impression that the world will not last much longer. But how do we know that this world is not destined to last for millions of years? If so, then the period during which mankind was awaiting its Saviour will appear a mere nothing.

This answer rests upon a hypothesis, possible, even probable,[1] but still an hypothesis. But there is an answer which rests upon certain facts and realities. Did not the Son of God retard his coming in order to make man realise the full extent of his need? An infirmity which is no sooner caused than healed is hardly an infirmity at all, for it is

[1] For our part we would willingly believe, considering the barbarity even of so-called civilised nations, that God intends to make the world a much better place than it is now, before he puts an end to it.

scarcely felt, and there is the danger that the blessing of having it healed is not fully appreciated. If the Redemption had followed immediately upon the Fall, what value would the Redemption have for us? When we have suffered for a long time we are more grateful to him who makes our suffering cease. If the end of the Great War had come on the 30th August, 1914, would it have been greeted with the enthusiasm of the 11th November, 1918?

Moreover, the Word was preparing the world for his coming. His coming should be announced, foretold, prefigured. The whole of humanity should look towards his cradle as its goal, until the cradle should then become the starting-place from which mankind should set out to fulfil God's providential plan. There were centuries before the Incarnation, there have been centuries after it; but Christ is still the centre of the world. We men do not know how to make preparations. God, who might always, did he so will, act suddenly, rarely deigns to do so. He arranges and prepares everything long beforehand. The ways of God are indeed impenetrable, but—more than that—they are full of wisdom.

The majority of those who ask why Christ came so late have at the back of their minds the idea that before the coming of Christ men could not be saved. This idea is quite

mistaken. Those who lived before Christ were in many ways situated as pagans are to-day ; and we shall see later that pagans are by no means deprived of the means of salvation.

* * *

And so, when man seemed irrevocably to have lost the divine life, the eternal Word, at the moment appointed by God's decree came upon earth, and his sacrifice caused the supernatural life to be restored to us.

Bear in mind the three panels of the triptych : the divine life given to mankind, the divine life lost, the divine life restored. We must now answer the question : at what moment precisely in the history of each one of us, and by what means is this divine life communicated to us ? The moment is that in which we are initiated into the Christian life, and the means is the sacrament of Baptism.

All that has been said so far has been necessary in order to indicate the place which baptism occupies in the general synthesis of Catholic doctrine. But we must now proceed to explain a little more exactly the sacrament by which we are made Christians.

It has pleased Christ our Saviour, in order to communicate the divine life to us, to institute certain rites as channels of grace,

called the sacraments. We are body and soul, composed of a visible and an invisible element. Christ, wishing to adapt his teaching to our intelligence as well as to our needs, united these two elements in the sacraments which he instituted. Hence a sacrament is defined as the sensible sign of an invisible grace instituted by Christ. The sacraments are seven in number. Baptism is the first of all; first not only in chronological order, but also in order of importance, in this sense at least, that without it none of the others can be received.

Let us try to represent to ourselves what effect is produced in the soul by this sacrament of Christian initiation.

Take a child who has just been born into the world. A descendant of our first parents, Adam and Eve, he finds himself burdened with a sad inheritance. He succeeds to the loss of all the divine gifts which had been bestowed upon man in the beginning. This little one just born is a child of man, not a child of God. If he dies before baptism he will never see God face to face. Deprived as he is of his elevation to the supernatural order and of the power to live a supernatural life, he will never, unless something intervenes to make it possible for him, be able to live the "divine life." His lot will indeed be a happy one, but his happiness will be merely natural and out of all proportion to the

sublime happiness to which man had originally been destined.

But let us suppose that the child lives and that his parents are sufficiently good Christians to have him baptised. He is taken to the church. Properly speaking, since he is a little pagan, he ought not to be allowed to enter the sacred edifice reserved for the Eucharistic worship. In the early days of Christianity, the faithful would never have allowed a pagan to enter the place where they celebrated what they called the "breaking of bread." Now custom has made Christian churches more easily accessible. And after all it is but a child, and the Church, a good Mother, has pity upon its body as well as its soul; instead of keeping it at the entrance to the church, where the preliminary questions ought normally to be put, she allows it to enter. But the baptismal font, according to custom, is kept at the bottom of the church.

"What askest thou of the Church of God?"

If it is an adult, he himself, if a child, the godfather and godmother, answer: "Faith."

"What does faith bring you to?" "Life everlasting."

It is a question of life everlasting. In virtue of his human birth the child possesses

a perishable life; he seeks divine life, eternal life. Up to this moment he can have with God only the relation of the creature to the Creator. Baptism will give him the relation of a child to his Father. When our Lord, who certainly did not need baptism for himself, willed to be baptised by John in the Jordan, the voice of his Father declared: "This is my beloved Son." In a few moments, when the essential rite has taken place—the pouring of the water on the forehead of the child, with the appointed words—God will be able to say of the child, or the adult, there present: "This is my beloved son." The bond of divine sonship had been broken. Now it is renewed, and this little child is once more "one of the family." "In him I am well pleased."

When the child is brought to the church, he is under the dominion of "the enemy of the human race." Even before he was born the devil had won a victory over him, when he made Adam lose his supernatural status. Baptism will wrest from the demon the rights that God had allowed him to exercise over this young life.

The priest, armed with the power of Christ, who during his life on earth had vouchsafed to drive devils out of the bodies of men possessed, will now pronounce over the child certain formulas called exorcisms, in order to expel the demon and allow God to

enter the soul of this little child in which he desires to dwell.

Here is the shortest and most characteristic of these exorcisms: "Go forth from this child, unclean spirit, and give place to the Holy Spirit." Two or three times the order is repeated: "Go forth, your dominion is finished now; give place to the Holy Spirit."

Shortly afterwards the essential rite of baptism is performed: "I baptise thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." In this moment—since these words are as efficacious as the words of consecration in the Mass: they produce what they signify—the devil is forced to depart from the child's soul, and God, the Holy Trinity,[1] silently and triumphantly enters into the child who is now baptised.

It should be noted that the words, the injunctions and the incidental rites of which we shall speak later and which together with the exorcisms accompany the essential rite, obtain their effect only in virtue of the fact that they are performed in conjunction with the essential rite.[2]

[1] Only the Holy Ghost is named, but the other two persons must be present with Him.

[2] Only the essential rite is necessary in case of grave danger, though there remains the obligation to supply the other ceremonies when it becomes

The central idea of baptism is that the soul had lost its primitive splendour; the baptismal water restores it. From the negative point of view: the soul did not possess the divine presence; now God dwells in the soul and, as so far as he is concerned, dwells there for ever. Only mortal sin will drive the Blessed Trinity from this temple.

The presence of God in the soul of the baptised may be compared with the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, as far as the reality of each presence is concerned, although the manner of presence is very different. The presence of God in the soul by baptism is a real presence, and so also is the presence of Christ in us by Holy Communion. But while the baptismal presence is a presence common to all Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, the presence which results from Holy Communion is special to the Second Person. Only the Son became incarnate, and only he prolongs this Incarnation in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Moreover the baptismal presence is completely invisible; God has no body. The presence of the God-man in us by Holy Communion is a bodily presence; it is the presence in us of the flesh of the Word Incarnate, of the whole of his person.

possible. The Church insists upon these ceremonies —except in the danger of death—because they have great value in declaring and explaining all the effects that are involved in the essential rite.

Of this divine presence, which is the result of grace in the soul, we have no consciousness. It is true that we read in certain authors: "Sometimes as I was reading I became filled with the realisation of the presence of God. If was impossible for me to doubt that God was within me";[1] or: "In this state of sweet repose the soul enjoys the feeling of God's presence,"[2] or: "The soul knows that God is within her. With a certitude that comes from on high, she feels the presence of God. The more one advances in the service of God, the more vivid and the more constant this feeling becomes."[3] "Then the soul sees without reasoning. God is so present within the soul that one seems to feel the Person to whom one is speaking."[4] But when we read such and similar passages we must remember that these are special favours, usually called mystical states. The presence of God in us by grace is normally unfelt; it is beyond psychological consciousness, and belongs to the realm of faith. It is one thing to know that one is at peace with God and therefore in a state of grace; it is quite another to feel God living within us, even though we know that the state of grace

[1] St Teresa: *Autobiography*, ch. x.

[2] St Francis of Sales: *Love of God*, Book VI., ch. 8 and 9.

[3] St Alphonsus Rodriguez: *Life, from his Reminiscences*, n. 40.

[4] Ven. L. du Pont: *Life of the Blessed Alvarez*.

renders him present in the soul. Nor does this doctrine contradict the words of St Paul, "The Holy Spirit gives testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God" (Rom. viii 16). One may know with reasonable certainty that one is in a state of grace and experience, on that account a real peace. But that does not mean that what is ordinarily beyond our apprehension is perceived by us. God, whether within or outside us, is not in this life the object of our direct perception.

But though we cannot feel it, this real presence of God in the soul should be the object of our most fervent devotion. Would that every Christian possessed the intelligent faith of that great University Professor, Léon Ollé Laprune. At the age of nineteen he took first place at the Ecole Normale and had to resign his professorship in 1880 only because he had protested against the expulsion of a religious community. He died in 1898, and after his death were found among his papers notes such as these :

"The Christian is one who is baptised and professes the doctrine of Jesus Christ."

"I, by the grace of God, am a Christian."

"To be a Christian is a gift of God, and the greatest of all gifts."

"Do I know what it is to be a Christian ? Do I think of it ? "

"Do I live as a baptised person ought to live?"

"The Christian is a perfect man, supernaturally healed, restored to his primitive health and then supernaturally raised above human perfection; deified, one might say."

"If I live the life of grace I am participating in the life of God himself."

"It is not enough to be a Christian by routine or sentiment. I want to be a Christian with my eyes open, and with deep understanding. I want to consider well what I am, to see and penetrate the meaning of it."

What Christian would not make this programme of intelligent Christianity his own?

CHAPTER IV

THE INSTITUTION OF BAPTISM

When precisely did our Lord institute the sacrament of baptism? St Bonaventure[1] and others think that its institution was progressive; that Christ first of all made preparations for the rite, then created it, and finally confirmed its institution. He *prepared* it, both by actions, as when he was baptised by St John in the Jordan, and by words, when he spoke with Nicodemus concerning a second birth by water and the Holy Ghost. He *instituted* it when he began to baptise through the ministry of his disciples: "After these things," we read in the Gospel of St John (iii 22), "Jesus and his disciples came into the land of Judea, and there he abode with them and baptised." He *confirmed* its institution by his actions when water flowed from his side together with the last drops of his blood, and by words when, for example, he sent his disciples to the end of the earth with the mission of baptising (Matt. xxviii 19).

St Thomas Aquinas and the majority of theologians, as also the "Roman Catechism,"

[1] IV, dist. 3, p. 2, a. 1, q. 1.

fix the time of institution at the moment when the Saviour himself was baptised. The Gospel describes the scene in magnificent detail. The austere John the Baptist preparing for his work by a life of penance and prayer ; Jesus, who certainly needed no purification, but rather vouchsafes to purify the water by his contact with it ; the Holy Ghost descending in the form of the symbolic dove ; and finally the Father proclaiming from heaven the glory of the Son. It may be noted too that all four Evangelists mention the baptism of Christ (Matt. iii 13 ; Mark i 9 ; Luke iii 222 ; John i 32).

The new element introduced by Christ in the institution of baptism was not the mere washing with water ; ceremonial washings had existed before. What is peculiar to Christ is that he made this special ceremonial washing a channel of grace, an action objectively sanctifying, a ceremony which gives grace not *ex opere operantis* merely, as the theologians say, i.e. not in view of the dispositions of the recipient, but of its own intrinsic power (*ex opere operato*), as in the case also of the other sacraments.

We may see from a well-known page of the Acts of the Apostles in what honour the sacrament of baptism was held from the earliest days of Christianity ; how it truly marked the rupture with paganism and admission into the religion of Jesus Christ. The writer

describes the baptism of the eunuch of Queen Candace by Philip the deacon (Acts viii). "Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying: Arise, go towards the south, to the way that goeth down from Jerusalem to Gaza; this is desert. And rising up he went. And behold a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch, of great authority under Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge over all her treasures, had come to Jerusalem to adore. And he was returning, sitting in his chariot and reading Isaias the prophet. And the spirit said to Philip: Go near and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip running thither, heard him reading the prophet Isaias. And he said: Thinkest thou that thou understandest what thou readest? Who said: And how can I, unless some man show me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. And the place of the Scripture which he was reading was this: He was led as a sheep to the slaughter and like a lamb without voice before his shearer, so openeth he not his mouth. . . . And the eunuch answering Philip said: I beseech thee, of whom doth the prophet speak this, of himself or of some other man? Then Philip opening his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came to a certain water; and the eunuch said: See here is water; what doth hinder me from being baptised? And

Philip said: If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest. And he answering said: I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still; and they went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptised him."

The early documents of Christianity show many other traces of the use of baptism from the first beginnings of the preaching of the Gospel. In the same book, the Acts of the Apostles, we read in the second chapter: "They therefore that received (Peter's) word were baptised; and there were added in that day about three thousand souls." Again, in the eighth chapter: "(The Samaritans) were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus." Individuals, too, are mentioned as having been baptised: Paul the persecutor, thrown to the ground on the way to Damascus, who goes to Damascus to be baptised (ch. ix); Cornelius and his family, baptised by St Peter (ch. x); Lydia, the seller of purple, who after hearing the preaching of Paul in the city of Philippi asks for baptism for herself and her family (ch. xvi). We are told also of the inhabitants of Ephesus, also converted to the faith by St Paul, who were baptised in the name of Jesus the Saviour (ch. xviii).

The letters of St Paul, the great convert, often allude to the sacraments of initiation.

Writing to the Romans he tells them to regard themselves as dead by baptism and buried with Christ to rise with him to a new life (vi 3-9); he tells the Corinthians to preserve perfect harmony among themselves as befits those who have been baptised in the name of the same Christ and filled with the same Spirit (1 Cor. i 11-17; xii 13); he tells the Ephesians not to forget that they have "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (iv 5).

In the third chapter of his first epistle, St Peter in his turn reminds his readers that they are saved by baptism just as Noah and those who were with him were saved by the ark.

Undoubtedly this baptism "in the name of Christ" differs absolutely from the baptism of St John which prefigured it. This is a truth of faith, defined by the Council of Trent (Denzinger, 857). For the rest it is evident from many texts of Scripture, notably from the passage in the Acts where we are told of the Alexandrine Jew whom St Paul met at Ephesus. Full of piety and zeal, Apollo devotes himself to the apostolate, but as yet he only preaches the baptism of John. It was necessary to teach him that there is another baptism, that of Jesus, different from that of John and far greater (ch. xviii and xix). Nor is Apollo the only one at Ephesus who is ignorant of this. "We know not

even if there be a Holy Ghost" was the answer given by other disciples in that city, when St Paul asked them whether they had received the Holy Ghost. Their ignorance was explained by the fact that they had received only the baptism of John. The Apostle proceeded to complete their instruction: "John," he said, "baptised the people with the baptism of penance, saying, that they should believe in him who should come after him, that is to say, in Jesus." Many catechumens thereupon received the baptism of Jesus at the hands of Paul.

The Church has always seen in the baptism of John a symbol and a foreshadowing of the sacrament which the Master was to institute. She has always made a radical distinction between the two baptisms: the first produced its effect only in view of the subjective dispositions of the recipient; the second is a rite which by its intrinsic virtue produces the divine life of grace.

This objective efficacy of the baptismal rite is attested throughout Tradition. Suffice it to mention but one testimony, little known, but incomparable in its historic interest and literary beauty. The Emperor Constantine, in thanksgiving for the sacrament which had made him a Christian, wished to shower precious gifts upon the Baptistery of the Lateran. He presented a great bowl of porphyry lined with silver, with a column

in the midst of it, surmounted by golden censers, having at the side two silver statues, of Christ and St John the Baptist respectively, almost life-size, with a golden lamb from whose mouth the baptismal water flowed. To enhance the beauty of the building the Emperor commanded eight porphyry columns to be given, destined to support a sort of baldachino or canopy over the font. It was only later, under Sixtus III (432-440), that the columns were erected and put to the use for which they were designed. On an octagonal entablature a long metrical inscription, consisting of eight couplets, one on each side, was engraved. It ran as follows :

" Here are born with sublime birth those who are destined to possess heaven. They are born in the waters that are made fruitful by the Spirit of God."

" O sinner, who wouldst be purified from thy stains, plunge into these waters ; entering with the infirmities of the old man, thou shalt emerge a new creature."

" There is no division among those who are regenerated here ; they are one, because they have but one font, one Spirit, one faith."

" The Church, conceiving them under the action of the Holy Spirit, gives them birth—O virginal Birth !—in these waters."

" Wouldst thou be without stain ? Wash thyself in this fountain. It matters not what

sin it be that defile thee, be it that of thy first parents, or thine own."

"This fountain is the source of life that purifies the whole world. It gushed forth from the open side of Jesus."

"All ye who are reborn in this water have the right to the kingdom of heaven. But those who do not come hither to seek a second life will have no eternal happiness."

"Let none be terrified by the number or the nature of his sins; he who is washed in these waters will be purified."

Ancient traditions in the East preserve the memory of the place where Christ is supposed to have entered the Jordan to be baptised. It is supposed to be the same place where the river was opened for the passage of the Hebrews when pursued by the Egyptians.

About the year 600 a pilgrim tells us that there was an obelisk surmounted by a cross on the spot where Christ was baptised. Theodosius and others also mention this. Ordinarily the cross was visible above the water, being covered only in times of flood; a man standing upright would have the water up to his shoulders. A chapel seems to have existed at the place where Christ laid aside his garments for baptism, and also a stone bridge leading from the chapel to the obelisk.

In the twelfth century the cross no longer existed. The pilgrim Theoderic saw only a great stone upon which Christ stood for his baptism. It is outside the course of the river, for, he remarks, " Jesus did not go into the Jordan ; the Jordan came to him." Traces of this opinion, which is ancient and which the Divine Office itself does not discard, are to be found in certain Cappadocian paintings of the tenth century, where the water of the Jordan is seen rising up to the waist of the Saviour and clothing him as in a garment. Two centuries later the same idea is found depicted on the doors of the cathedrals of Chartres, Le Mans, and Notre Dame du Port at Clermont ; and in the Trocadero museum it is to be seen portrayed in bronze upon the magnificent fonts of Hildesheim and Liège.

A further detail may be noted, which Christian archæology seems to establish. It is that, in all probability, John the Baptist did not need to pour water upon the shoulders of our Lord, since baptism was performed by immersion. In certain ancient pictures we see the Baptist not pouring water but pressing upon the head of Jesus as if to plunge him into the stream.

The baptism of Christ has been a favourite subject for artists throughout the ages of Christianity. Already in the catacombs we find pictures, rather primitive indeed, but

still enabling us to see John the Baptist, a young man, baptising Jesus, with the dove overhead. Often it is not easy to distinguish whether the person who is baptised is Christ himself or a Christian; sometimes he has the stature of a child, as if to indicate the spiritual growth through which he is to pass. Sometimes we find another symbolical scene together with it: a fish taken from the Jordan in which Christ was baptised, or a fish caught from the water that gushes from the mystic rock.

With the gradual progress of art we find Donatello's *John the Baptist* in Siena Cathedral; "Baptism" in the *Seven Sacraments* of Roger van der Weyden in the Antwerp Museum; *The Baptism of Our Lord* of Guido Reni; the *Jordan Scene* in the choir of Chartres Cathedral, and on the doors of the Baptistery at Florence. In more recent times *Baptism after the preaching of St Peter*, by the German painter Fügel, and the *Baptism* of Luc Olivier-Merson are particularly notable. Many others might be cited.

In the Liturgy the Baptism of our Lord is chiefly commemorated on the Feast of the Epiphany, the 6th January. Unfortunately—one is tempted to say—of the three events which are celebrated on that day, the coming of the Wise Men, the Baptism of Christ in the Jordan and the changing of the water into wine at Cana, the first holds by far the chief

place in modern piety and devotion. In fact in the West the Feast is exclusively dedicated to that event, so that the 6th January is simply the Feast of the Wise Men ; the rest is forgotten. In the Eastern Church the blessing of the waters on the Feast of the Epiphany is a very popular custom ; and formerly on the banks of the Nile very picturesque celebrations took place in this connection. Nor was the ardour of popular devotion cooled by the bitter cold of Russia. When the day arrived, the ice would be broken so that the water to be blessed might gush forth, and the pious people would plunge into it. In the time of the Tsars an imposing ceremony took place in St Petersburg. A wooden chapel was erected on the frozen river Neva, called " Jordan," and in the middle of it a hole was made in the ice. The priests in full vestments, the emperor with his Court and regiments of soldiers would come for the festivity. The more courageous would throw themselves into the water ; others would be content to drink, or to sprinkle themselves with it. The water was blessed with a form of words—poetical and majestic in its simplicity—whose origin goes back to a very early date.[1]

[1] See *Études*, 5 Jan., 1926.

CHAPTER V

THE SYMBOLISM AND THE RITES OF BAPTISM

EXPLAINING the Christian life to a rich Jew (Nicodemus) who had come secretly to visit him, our Lord said: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven" (John iii 5-7). Water washes away bodily stains; Jesus would make use of it, giving it a divine power—therefore he adds the words, "and the Holy Ghost"—to free the soul from the stain of original sin. There is a beautiful story in the Old Testament which foreshadows the wonders that water can work when it is made the instrument of the Almighty.

Naaman, the leader of the army of the king of Syria, was stricken with leprosy. "I wish," said one of his wife's slaves, "my master had been with the prophet that is in Samaria [Eliseus]; he would certainly have healed him of the leprosy that he hath." So Naaman went with his horses and chariots to the house of Eliseus. The latter, informed of his visitor's object, sent him this

message : " Go and wash seven times in the Jordan and thy flesh shall recover health, and thou shalt be clean." Naaman was furious with the prophet for refusing to put himself out and for treating with him through a third person, and especially for suggesting such an unsuitable remedy. " Are not the rivers of my own country, the Abana and the Pharphar, better than all the waters of Israel, that I may wash in them and be made clean ?" A sensible servant said to him : " Father, if the prophet had bidden thee do some great thing, surely thou shouldst have done it ; how much rather what he now hath said to thee : Wash and thou shalt be clean." Naaman saw the point of the remark, went to the river Jordan, washed in it and came forth healed (4 Kings v).

A corresponding episode is related in the New Testament. In the time of our Lord there was in Jerusalem near the Sheep-gate a pool provided with porches under which the lame, the blind, and the palsied took shelter. On certain days the water of the pool produced extraordinary effects ; the popular belief was that an angel of God moved the water with a wand and that the first to enter the pool after the moving of the water was cured. Our Lord passing by saw a man who had been sick for thirty-eight years. He said to him : " Wilt thou be made whole ? " The man answered :

"Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pond. For whilst I am coming another goeth down before me." Our Lord was moved with pity and healed him.

An even more striking figure of Christian baptism was the baptism that Christ himself vouchsafed to receive at the beginning of his public life; but of that we have spoken sufficiently. John the Precursor tries in vain to dissuade him: "I ought to be baptised by thee; and comest thou to me?" (Matt. iii 13). But the Master insists; he enters the water and by this act of humility —for him quite unnecessary—deigns to foreshadow the necessary purification that baptism will accomplish for us.

In the early days of Christianity this form of baptism—by immersion—was probably the only form in use. With the increase in the number of Christians the method of sprinkling was substituted; but since it could not always be guaranteed that the water would actually touch each of the persons to be baptised, and since for the validity of the sacrament this is necessary, the method of infusion was finally adopted, a few drops of water being poured upon the forehead of the child or adult to be baptised, while the essential form of words is pronounced: "I baptise thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

Traces are found in relatively late times of baptism by immersion. Constantine and Clovis, if we are to believe certain pictures and sculptures, received the sacrament of Christian initiation under this form. We find indications of this method until the fifteenth century. Nevertheless, the method of infusion was not unknown to the early Christians ; a proof of this is to be found in a document of the first century, *The Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles*. " Baptise in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, immersing in flowing water. If you have no flowing water, then in other water. If this is impossible, pour water thrice upon the head, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." In the thirteenth century baptism by infusion became more and more common and, especially among Northern peoples, it soon became the general practice.

The symbolism of the sacrament is clear enough if we consider the significance of the material used : water. But this significance becomes clearer still when we study the manner in which the sacrament was administered in the early ages of Christianity.

Both the *day* on which the sacrament was conferred and the *manner* in which the rite was administered are symbolical of the effect of the sacrament.

The day chosen for the administration of Baptism was the eve of Easter Day. What is the central idea of Christianity? It is essentially this, that Christ, in order to restore to us the divine life which we had lost in Adam, was not content to become "one of us," but willed that each of us should in a sense be a part of him, as he explained in the final communication that he made to his Apostles before the Passion: "I am the vine, you are the branches." The complete Christ is the vine and the branches together. So that we might be "deified," Jesus has made us Christs with him; he unites us vitally to his person, makes us branches attached to the same living trunk. Now baptism is precisely the sacrament by which we are grafted upon Christ. It was important, therefore, in order that Christians might fully understand this, that they should be reminded of their union with the divine Head by the very date of their baptism.

What happened on Easter morning? Christ, the Head of his mystical body, came forth living from the tomb; since the Friday he had been dead; now he is risen again. The pagan not yet baptised is dead to supernatural life. For a long time he has been preparing; during the whole of Lent he has been undergoing instruction, he desires the Faith and is ready for baptism. The office

that we still recite on the Vigil of Easter Sunday recalls the ancient office that used to be recited on Holy Saturday night: the blessing of the Paschal Candle; then until after midnight, when Mass could be celebrated, the recitation of some Messianic prophecies; finally the blessing of the Fonts and the administration of baptism. The pagan, yesterday a dead branch, is now to be engrafted upon the living Christ; dead, he is now to rise to a new life. At the very moment when Christ is issuing forth from the tomb, at the first dawn of the Resurrection, he who is becoming a member of Christ is also rising from death. The head and the members rise again together. Easter is the Feast of the resurrection of Christ, but of the whole Christ, of Jesus and us with him, of the Head with the members, of Christ with Christians.

The manner in which the rite was formerly celebrated also helps us to understand. The baptistery usually consisted of a small erection, having in it instead of an altar, like our chapels, a rectangular hole rather like a grave that awaits a corpse. In fact it was a tomb. Remember that Christ the Head is in the tomb. He who comes to ask for baptism is dead also. He descends now into the baptismal font in which is the water with which the priest or the bishop baptises him. At the very moment when Christ came

forth from the sepulchre, the baptised person, now a member of Christ, comes forth from his tomb.

It was thus easy for the early Christians to understand their union with our Lord. With the increase in the number of Christians it has been found necessary to group the ceremonies of baptism together, and for the reasons above stated, to change the manner of baptising. But these changes are incidental; the inner reality of the rites remains. Baptism as it is administered to-day is less expressive externally; but it keeps not only its deep efficacy, but all its symbolism.

In the early ages those who sought to enter the Church were usually pagans arrived at an adult age. Gradually whole families were converted and the practice began of administering baptism to infants. Of these no preliminary instruction could be required; but of adults the Church rightly demanded a preparation: the catechumenate. None was admitted to the Faith save those whose knowledge and virtue seemed sufficient.

Several of the ceremonies of the present rite, instead of being performed at one time as they are now, were then spread over the whole period of preparation.

As we have already remarked, the changes which have taken place in the administration of the sacraments are merely incidental;

the substantial reality remains intact. What has been changed? Simply this, that originally as soon as baptism had been administered, there was a procession to the "basilica" for the "breaking of bread" (the Eucharistic communion), and on the way a stop was made at a sort of altar of repose, where the anointing of the Holy Spirit was performed (Confirmation). Nowadays Confirmation and the Eucharist are separately administered. In addition, the ceremonies of the catechumenate, which were formerly spread over a considerable period, have now been united and condensed in one ceremony.

In order to give our readers a better understanding of the sacrament, we will now place the prayers and different parts of the present rite of baptism in their former scheme and context.

First Part

When a pagan, accompanied usually by two Christians who vouched for him, asked for admission into the Church, he had to present himself before the Bishop to have his name inscribed among the aspirants.

The Bishop interrogated him concerning his intentions and on his faith; these questions and answers we have already quoted. If it appeared that the petitioner

was honest and right-intentioned, his name was taken and inscribed on the register. This proceeding was not without its dangers, since such documents might easily come under the eyes of the police in the case of a raid upon the catacombs ; these lists might easily become proscription lists or edicts of death for those whose names were thereon inscribed. At the present day, too, a note is taken of the baptised ; they are written in the book of life. If they never besmirch or tear that page, then their eternal happiness is assured.

After the preliminary inquiries followed four rites : the breathing, the sign of the cross, the imposition of hands, and the ceremony of the salt.

As the priest pronounces the formula, " Go forth, unclean spirit, and give place to the Holy Ghost," he breathes lightly three times on the child ; three times in honour of the Holy Trinity. This breathing is a symbol of the Holy Spirit and recalls the incident of Pentecost. The priest, in accordance with the Ritual, then makes the sign of the cross with his thumb, first on the brow and then on the breast of the child, saying : " Receive the sign of the cross on the brow and on the heart ; embrace faith in the divine precepts and be such in thy conduct that thou mayest serve as the tabernacle of the Most High." Then comes

the imposition of hands, a ceremony so often used by our Lord and his Apostles. "There was a woman," St Luke tells us, "who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years . . . Jesus laid his hands upon her and immediately she was made straight and glorified God" (Luke xiii 11, 13). St Matthew also mentions cures effected by this means (ix 18; xix 13-15). As he lays his hands upon the child he calls upon God with these words: "Deign to look upon thy servant *N.* . . . whom thou hast vouchsafed to initiate into the mysteries of thy faith; deliver him from all blindness of heart, break the bonds with which Satan had bound him; give him access to thy goodness, and in token of thy wisdom may he be purified from sin and serve thee in the faithful practice of the commandments and grow each day in virtue."

The ceremony of the salt may appear at first sight rather strange; but its significance is evident. Salt preserves, and salt gives flavour. By placing this tiny bit of salt on the lips of the catechumen the Church wishes to indicate the wisdom that he must show, both to avoid corruption and to taste the things of God. Our Lord, who always used the most common elements, such as water, fire, bread, seed, the vine, money to express his meaning, did not forget salt. To his Apostles he said: "You are the salt of the earth, if the salt lose its savour, with what shall it be

salted" (Matt. v 13). And on another occasion: "Have salt in you, and have peace among you" (Mark ix 49).

Second Part

The second part of the baptismal rite comprises another exorcism, shorter than the first, but no less energetic. It recalls one of the miracles of Christ which shows his power to the greatest advantage: "I adjure thee, unclean spirit, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, go forth and retire from this servant of God. He it is that commands thee, damned and accursed spirit, who walked upon the sea and stretched forth his hand to save Peter from drowning."

And again: "Therefore, cursed demon, obey the command that is given thee; pay homage to the living true God, to Jesus Christ his Son and to the Holy Spirit. Go forth from this child, for Jesus Christ our Lord and our God has vouchsafed to call him to the holy state of grace, to the fountain of baptism and its abundant blessings."

Then on the brow of the catechumen the divine sign of the Redemption is officially made. The priest does not address the child, but still vigorously commands the devil: "This sign of the holy Cross which

we make upon his brow, never dare, thou cursed Satan, to violate."

Then hands are again laid on the child with a suitable prayer. Then follows the procession to the baptismal font while the Creed and the Our Father are recited.

While the child is being led from the porch of the church to the baptismal font the priest, as a sign of the authority of the Church over this child that is now being offered to her, holds the end of his stole over his head, and calling him by name, says: "*N.* . . . enter into the house of God, that thou mayest have part with Christ in eternal life."

An anti-supernatural spirit leads many nowadays to try to substitute names of a secular flavour for the traditional names of saints. Our fathers were accustomed to give to their children the name of a heavenly patron. Nowadays many prefer that their child should go by the name of some ancient Roman pagan, like Marius, or of a mere vegetable, like Verveine. "Don't they sound just as well as Peter, John, or Teresa?" At the time of the Convention, when it was desired to introduce this reform, Fabre d'Eglantine drew up the proposed law. "It was time," he said quite seriously, "now that these canonised saints and beatified skeletons had been driven out of the Calendar, for the nation to put in their places something

worthy, if not of their cult, at any rate of their culture." As a result of this rather doubtful play upon words, the saints found their places taken by earth-products, animals and ploughing machines. (For example: Raisin, Safran, Chataigne, Cheval, Balsamine.)

Thank God, even if a sense of Christianity had not brought back the names of the saints to the Calendar, common sense and good taste would have done so. At the present day a number of Catholics have made up their minds at all costs to profess their belief in the high dignity of baptism. They are trying to replace the custom of announcing the birth of their children by that of announcing their entrance into the Christian life by baptism. For the formula: "Mr. and Mrs.—— have the honour to inform you of the birth of their son (or their daughter)," they are tending to substitute the following: "Mr. and Mrs.—— have the honour to inform you that their son (or daughter) born to the divine life by Holy Baptism on the — of ———, in the year ——, has received the name of ———."

Third Part

We come now to the ceremonies immediately preceding the essential rite of the sacrament.

There is another exorcism. The Church desires to make it clear that there are three actors in the drama : the priest who baptises in the name of Jesus Christ, the pagan to be baptised, who is to be made a child of God, and the devil who has to be deprived of his rights, and will soon give place to the Holy Trinity, according to the injunction : " I adjure thee, unclean spirit, in the name of God the Father Almighty, in the name of Jesus Christ his Son our Lord and Judge, and by the power of the Holy Ghost, to depart from this creature of God, *N.* . . . . whom our Lord has deigned to-day to call into his holy house that he may become the temple of the living God and that the Holy Spirit may dwell within him. By the same Christ our Lord who will come to judge the living and the dead."

The priest then imitates the gesture used by our Lord in healing the deaf mute in the Gospel. Jesus had slightly moistened his finger with spittle and touched the lips of the sick man, saying : " Ephpheta," which is " Be thou open." Likewise the priest touches the ears of the catechumen, saying : " Ephpheta " ; which is " Be thou open," and his nostrils, saying : *In odorem suavitatis* (" Unto an odour of sweetness.")

Now the future neophyte is called upon to say that he has made his choice between the devil and Jesus Christ :

The priest : " Dost thou renounce Satan ?"

The godfather, or godmother, in the name of the child : " I do renounce him."

Priest : " And all his works ? "

Godfather : " I do renounce them."

Priest : " And all his pomps ? "

Godfather : " I do renounce them."

After this threefold question and answer the priest moistens his thumb in the oil of catechumens and anoints the child on the breast and between the shoulders, and then asks :

" Dost thou believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth ? "

" I do believe."

" Dost thou believe in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord who became man and suffered ? "

" I do believe."

" Dost thou believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting ? "

" I do believe."

A threefold renunciation, followed by a threefold profession of faith. One cannot

but be struck by the magnificent solemnity of these rites. If later the baptised person delivers himself again to Satan by falling into mortal sin, he has not the excuse of ignorance. By sinning he is violating the most sacred promises, promises renewed by him on the day of his first communion, promises that bind irrevocably.

Fourth Part

Now the moment has come for the essential rite of the sacrament. The question is asked: "Wilt thou be baptised?" The answer is given, "I will." Then, while godfather or godmother, or both, hold the child, the priest pours water three times in the form of a cross on his head, saying:

N.... I baptise thee in the name of the Father (*he pours a few drops of water*), and of the Son (*he pours water again*), and of the Holy Ghost (*he pours a third time*).

Having anointed the child with fragrant oil, called chrism, the priest places a white linen cloth on the head of the child. To this little ceremony we shall return later. Then he gives to the child or to the godparent a lighted candle and says:

"Receive this burning light, and keep thy baptism so as to be without blame; keep the commandments of God; that when the

Lord shall come to the Nuptials, thou mayest meet him in the Company of all the Saints in the heavenly Court, and have eternal life and live for ever and ever."

Among the Greeks baptism is called "enlightenment," to baptise is "to enlighten," and the baptistery is the place where one "enlightens." As our Lord after his Resurrection loved to salute his disciples with the consoling words: "Peace be with you," so also after the spiritual resurrection brought about by baptism, the Church bids farewell to her new child with the words: "*N.* . . . . go in peace, and the Lord be ever with thee."

No one who has tried to grasp the deep significance of the baptismal rite and meditated, however little, upon the formulas and prayers used by the Church in the sacrament of Christian initiation, can fail to recognise the grandeur of this rite which engrafts us upon Christ and infuses the divine life in our souls. We can understand why St Louis preferred to all other titles that of Louis of Poissy, in memory of the place of his baptism; and why Vincent Ferrer made periodical pilgrimages to the black marble font in the church of Saint-Etienne at Valence, his native town. We are told of General Drouet, Count of the Empire and aide-de-camp to Napoleon—"the wise man of the Great Army" as he was called—that

being asked by Napoleon what was his dearest desire, he answered that he wanted nothing more than to dwell in the parish where he was baptised. His heart was filled with the devout memory of his baptism which had made him a child of God, and the church where he had received this sacrament of life was a spiritual home no less dear to him than his temporal native land.

The sacrament of baptism is impressive enough when it is administered to a small child; but it is still more so in the case of an adult who has to answer the questions himself, recite the profession of faith and personally give the undertakings involved. Many will remember the account which Alphonse Ratisbonne gives of his baptism.[1] The future founder of the Fathers of Sion was converted by the *Memorare,* which Gustave de Bussières had asked him to copy out and learn by heart. He wished to make his profession with all the solemnity possible. This he did at the hands of Cardinal Patrizi, receiving the sacrament dressed in a long robe of white silk.

An institution has been founded in Holland, called the Œuvre de St Reynelde, the object of which is to give to adult catechumens a full realisation of the importance of their baptism. Candidates for baptism are

[1] *Life,* p. 218.

divided into four categories, and for their catechism-lesson are dressed in a special colour according to the category to which they belong. First they wear green, the colour for hope ; then violet, for repentance ; then red, while they learn of the Passion and Death of our Lord ; and finally black, forming a contrast to the white robe of baptism, which they are invited to wear during the week after their reception into the Church. This ceremonial, accompanied by a vivid and complete religious instruction, makes a great impression upon the young—and old—catechumens, and in after-life they never forget the preparation for their baptism.

CHAPTER VI

IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCES OF BAPTISM

EVERY privilege brings its obligations, and the privilege conferred upon us in baptism entails the obligation for the Christian of living a virtuous life.

We are told of the Dauphin, the father of Louis XVI, that he gave his two sons this touching lesson. They had been baptised without ceremony at the time of birth, and seven or eight years later the ceremonies were supplied. The prince had the baptismal register brought to him. Immediately before their two names was that of the son of a poor artisan. "See, my children," said the prince, "in the eyes of God men of all conditions are equal. In his sight faith and virtue are all that matters. One day you will be greater than this child in the eyes of the world; but if he is more virtuous than you, then he will be greater than you in the sight of God."

If baptism obliges us to the practice of all the virtues, there are three which, according to the liturgy of the sacrament, are most

rigorously imposed : purity, generosity, and joy.

The first obligation of the child of God is to be pure. This is an evident consequence of baptism. By this sacrament God comes and dwells in the soul by a special presence ; and this presence nothing must violate.

Purity may be understood in a wide or a narrow sense. In the wide sense it means the avoidance of all grave sin. Grave sin kills the divine life in us, and this is the reason why it is called mortal. By baptism we have received this life, and it is our duty to preserve it at all costs. On the day of our initiation the priest says to the devil : " Go forth from this child, unclean spirit, and give place to the Holy Ghost." Mortal sin is nothing else than the reversal of this formula: " Depart from me, Holy Spirit, and thou, unclean spirit, come and dwell within me."

But it must be admitted that the greatest and most common difficulty in leading a moral life is obedience to God in all that concerns the sixth and ninth commandments. And baptism calls for obedience on this point in particular, that is, for purity in the strict sense. One of the ceremonies of the sacrament is intended to emphasise this : before dismissing the baptised person the priest takes a white cloth and, placing it upon the head of the child, says : " Receive

this white garment and see that thou carry it without stain before the judgment-seat of our Lord Jesus Christ that thou mayest have eternal life." Formerly, when baptism was conferred on the night of Holy Saturday, every baptised person received a white garment which he was required to wear at every function until the following Sunday exclusive. From that day onwards they were permitted to wear ordinary clothes again. Hence the name given to Low Sunday: *In albis deponendis*, or more briefly, *in albis*.

History tells us of an early Bishop who, in order to put to shame a Christian who had given scandal by falling into sin, sent for a baptismal robe and had it carried as a flag in procession to the place where the guilty person was. The latter, at the thought of the account which he would be called upon to render to God, asked pardon and gave up his life of sin. Another Christian, Elpidophorus, apostasised after his baptism, and became a persecutor. He went so far as to cite before his tribunal the holy deacon Murita who had been his godfather. Murita, on the day when sentence was passed upon him, brought hidden under his garment the baptismal robe that Elpidophorus had received at his baptism. "Behold," he said, holding it up before him, "the evidence of your apostasy. It will accuse you at God's

tribunal. This white robe will become a garment of flame which will devour you for all eternity." Elpidophorus lost countenance and retired in confusion.

The most eloquent of all the apostles of baptismal purity is St Paul. He gives as the reason of it the fact that God is within the soul of the baptised. Instead of addressing long dissertations to the recently converted pagans, to exhort them to keep from sin, he contented himself with recalling their sublime privilege of being temples of God: "Know you not that you are the temples of God and that the Holy Spirit dwells in you?" This is true and religious self-esteem; to recognise the dignity of the body and soul in which the great living God dwells as a guest. This thought is the greatest possible guarantee of self-respect. The young martyr Tarcisius was able to pass through the streets of Rome without sullying his purity, and when he was called upon to deliver up the treasure that he carried, he preferred rather to die. Here it is not a question of the Eucharistic presence, but of the baptismal presence of God. But the rule is the same. It is expressed in the Breton motto: *Potius mori quam foedari*, "Death before stain".

After the virtue of purity, and closely connected with it, is generosity. It is impossible to keep pure without the courage necessary for a complete victory over oneself.

Baptism has given the Christian the divine life; but he still retains the unhappy heritage of concupiscence; his lower passions rebel against reason. As Mgr. Benson puts it so vividly: "Every Christian bears upon his lips, and unhappily one day may give, the kiss of Judas." We must be on our guard, ready for combat, strong; otherwise the divine life that we have received in baptism may be easily imperilled. We bear our treasure in a fragile vessel.

But we need generosity not only in order to conquer ourselves, to avoid sin; we need it also, and much more, to develop the gifts which we have received in baptism.

We have said that baptism gives us the divine life, makes us members of Christ. But this is only the beginning. The divine life is there, the resemblance to Christ is there, but only in germ. We must develop this seed, until, as St Paul says, we have reached "the perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. iv 13). We have been given all, but we must not let it run to waste; as the parable of the talents teaches us, we must not bury this capital. We must make it fructify; and this we can do only by generosity in the service of God.

The saints have profound vision. Père Eudes used to say: "The grace proper to

baptism is the grace of marytrdom." What did he mean by that? That every baptised person is to expect to die for the faith? Not necessarily; but that every baptised person, if he wishes to make the greatest possible use of his baptism, ought to use every endeavour, at the price even of constant sacrifice, to suppress in himself everything that is not "Christ," in order to realise as fully and as soon as possible the Christian ideal so well formulated by St Paul: "I live now, no longer I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii 20).

Does this mean that we are to suppress our natural perfections, and kill in us all that is human, even the best of it, to erect the supernatural upon the ruins of the natural? By no means. Such a Jansenist conception cannot be confused by any clear-minded person with the Catholic dogma.

Christianity asks no such barbarous and useless sacrifice. On the contrary, the more you are a man—a man in the noblest sense of the word, a man who is willing to give up, even at great sacrifice, the narrow and vulgar pleasures of this world—the more easily you will be a saint. This, then, is what baptism demands of us. It has given us the vocation of being "other Christs." But unfortunately there is still within us that "self" which is capable of opposing the grace of God and of drawing us further and

further away from the likeness of Christ. What was Christ? Christ was he who for the glory of his Father and for the redemption of mankind willed to come upon the earth to obey. Sin had been a revolt; redemption consisted in a perfect submission. The Word took upon himself the nature of man and became obedient unto death. Christ was "Christ" because in all things he did the will of the Father.

What then must we do, to be "other Christs"? The same thing; after the example of our divine Master and with the help of his grace, we must fulfil the will of the Father. If God's will is imposed upon a Christian in a grave matter, then to disobey is a mortal sin; if in a trivial matter, then disobedience is a venial sin. If it is not a question of a command of God, but merely of God's desire, then to oppose this is an "imperfection." If a person never wilfully opposes a command or a desire of God, he is a saint; he fulfils perfectly his vocation of "another Christ."

Again we may take St Paul as the best exponent of the manner in which the Christian law of mortification is bound up with our baptismal dignity. "Your life," he writes to the Colossians, "is hid with Christ in God. . . . Buried with him in baptism, in whom also you are risen again by the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him

up from the dead " (iii 3 ; ii 12). He explains this at greater length in the Epistle to the Romans : " What shall we say, then ? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound ? God forbid. For we that are dead to sin, how shall we live any longer therein ? Know you not that we who are baptised in Christ Jesus are baptised in his death ? For we are buried together with him by baptism unto death, so that . . . we also may walk in newness of life. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin may be destroyed, to the end that we may serve sin no longer. . . . So do you also reckon that you are dead to sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord. . . . You are not in the flesh but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you " (vi 1-12 ; viii 9).

What would sin be, if you had the unhappiness of falling into it, especially the sin of impurity ? An adultery, a betrayal of him who, dwelling in your heart, desires to remain there and fill it entirely, but is driven out by your sin. We have seen how the original liturgy of baptism is inspired by this teaching of St Paul. Moreover, the Roman Breviary, in memory of the baptism formerly administered on the night of the Resurrection, for its Lesson at Prime on the eight days following the resurrection of Christ—and his members—has adopted the

Apostle's invitation to the newly "risen": "If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above." . . . Do not live the life of the flesh, the life of sin, but a life of holiness. The earth ought no longer to interest you, but only the things that are above: *quae sursum sunt sapite.*

The divine life that the Christian receives at his baptism demands purity of life and generosity; but let us add that it also allows him and counsels him to rejoice.

A superficial view of the religion of Jesus Christ might give the impression of being sombre and, by reason of a certain austerity which it requires, depressing and joyless. There could be no greater error. It is true that the Gospel does not rate all pleasures alike and therefore does not hesitate to demand the sacrifice of lower pleasures in order to safeguard the true development of the soul. This perhaps gives colour to the view that we have mentioned. But for anyone who reads it aright, the Gospel is in very truth "the good news." The Gospel does not condemn any permissible human joy; and in addition, beyond the feeble and passing joys of natural life, it offers the hopes and joys of the supernatural life. As St Augustine says so admirably: Ye have a Father, ye have a fatherland, ye have an inheritance": a Father, who is God, a fatherland, which is heaven, and a patrimony, which is sanctifying

grace, a participation in the life of God, the divine life possessed here on earth in germ, and destined after death to blossom into the full flower of glory. The just man, when he reaches the end of his course, will be greeted by the words : " Enter into the joy of thy Lord " (Matt. xxv 21).

One who has this triple treasure may well do without anything else ; he is happy. If he understands the deep motives of Christian joy, even though, like St Paul or St Peter, he may be thrown in prison, he may still write : " I exceedingly abound with joy in all tribulation " (2 Cor. vii 4).

After all, if it were true that the Gospel makes us sad, then by contrast we ought to find the secret of true joy in the confidential utterances of those who have denied the Gospel or forsworn their baptism. Here is a man whom the world would call happy, a writer universally praised, rich as you will, living in the full satisfaction of all his desires, from the lowest and least noble—the desires of the flesh—to the most exquisite—the delights of the spirit. You think he is happy. Ask him, and he will tell you what he one day told his secretary : " If you could read in my heart you would be appalled. There is none in the whole world so wretched as I. People think I am happy. I have never been happy for a day, not even for an hour." In the *Jardin d' Epicure* he confesses : " One

would have to stop thinking altogether, not to feel the tragic absurdity of life. The root of all our misery is our complete ignorance of the reason why we exist. In a world where the light of faith is dead, evil and pain lose their meaning, and seem nothing but a hateful jest and a sinister farce." So speaks Anatole France. And Pierre Loti: "O God, faced by the bankruptcy of our pleasures, by the pitiable void of our existence, by the nothingness of our little dreams, what are we to do as the great night solemnly approaches? Where shall we go? Where find refuge?" Claude Farrère, in an account of his last visit to Loti, gives the lie to the rumour concerning his conversion; "No, alas! Loti has not changed in the slightest. I have just seen him, perhaps for the last time, and I found him exactly as I always knew him of old, as I have always found him in his books: an unbeliever, persuaded that the end of all things is nothing, a confirmed atheist, and because of this, desperate, desperate to the last limits of despair."

Another of these "happy" men tells us: "The Father is no more; we are derelict, alone in the world." Above us, then, there is nothing. Hence we must have recourse to creatures: "It is a great sin to deprive oneself of a pleasure." We only have to make sure that it *is* a pleasure. It can well be imagined of what kind these pleasures

are : of no very elevated order : " The royal way of happiness. . . . It is stoicism of the vulgar type to be miserable without complaining." [1]

A successful young student, later a brilliant advocate and academician, Edmond Rousse, at one time sought a fugitive joy in pleasure : " I used to come back home sad," he writes, " tired of the noise and dust, my head empty and my heart sad, dazed by the deceit underlying this superficial gaiety, having found nothing of what I sought, weeping hot tears and crying aloud, in good faith, but somewhat impiously : ' O God, where hast thou hidden happiness on this earth ? ' God might have given me many good answers, in particular that the Opera Ball was not of divine institution, and that it was not his fault if I had not enjoyed it. But usually, before this simple reflection had occurred to me, I had fallen asleep." [2]

In the circumstances one is inclined to believe the liturgy of baptism when it claims to open the gates of joy to the Christian. This joy may not always be felt ; but it is the joy foretold by the Gospel, the joy that passes all understanding. A few

[1] M. Jules Payot : *La conquête du bonheur*, p. 272.
[2] *Lettres*, t. I, pp. 117-118. Taine makes remarks in a similar strain : " On some days I am so tired of myself that I want to be sick " (t. I, 221).

moments before the child is actually baptised, the priest addresses to our Lord this prayer : " May he serve thee joyous in thy Church." This is more than a pious wish ; it is a behest. Our Lord wants to be served in gladness of heart.

But besides being a behest it is also the authentic proclamation of a privilege. The baptised—I mean, of course, those who remain faithful to their baptism—have the monopoly of true joy. Others may amuse themselves and laugh. But how can they be truly happy, how possess that freedom of the children of God, that happiness which is born of the assurance of being on earth the living reliquary of the Most High, while awaiting the joys of the beatific vision. In the words of Chesterton : " Joy is the great monopoly of Christians." " There are some," says P. Sertillanges, " who speak of Christian pessimism. This is nothing but a paradox. It is naturalism that exhales the stench of a corpse. Christianity is the only religion of joy."

To be convinced of this we should have to be able to penetrate to the depths of those souls who have remained faithful to their baptism. They alone can tell us how true it is that the Gospel is " good news." Doubtless the inner joy of the heart does not prevent them from feeling and suffering the miseries of this life. But in the midst of the

worst of their trials, one joy dominates and never changes, the joy of belonging to God. St Thomas Aquinas justly remarks that joy is not a virtue by itself, but is the natural efflorescence of the virtue of charity, the love of God. St Paul, recalling the torments that he has endured, exclaims: "Who shall separate us from the charity of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or famine, or nakedness, or hunger, or persecution, or the sword? . . . I am sure that . . . no creature shall separate us from the charity of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Having charity he has all things. "I abound exceedingly with joy in all my tribulations." "The fruits of charity are peace and joy" (Gal. v 22).

If you read the story of a conversion you will find that before returning to God the soul is full of trouble and distress; afterwards, in the majority of cases, we find joy and a profound peace. And if you wish to know where there is the deepest inward joy, it is in the heart where there has been most complete fidelity to the vows taken in baptism. Good St Louis used to "laugh right merrily"; St Francis of Assisi could not refrain from singing, so full of joy was he. In a sad world—and the world must be sad, since it needs so many amusements and distractions!—the cloisters must be the most cheerful oases. "Religious," wrote Faguet,

" not only practise gaiety, they regard it as a duty. It is one of their rules." St Ignatius, when he saw a novice taking things too seriously, told him to laugh.

The more Christian one is, the more accustomed he is to true joy ; and if a Christian, thinking to find virtue where there is none, is unable to develop joy and serenity in his heart, then he is lacking in one of the chief elements of true sanctity and, in spite of all his generosity, he is giving God only a small part of the homage which is his due.

Those words of the baptismal prayer should never be forgotten : " May he serve thee with joy in thy Church."

CHAPTER VII

BAPTISM AND INFANTS

Two objections, different both in nature and in seriousness, are made in connection with the infant-baptism.

The first is this : To baptise a child, as is done, when he is not of an age to judge critically of the religion that is being imposed upon him, is surely a violation of his freedom. He is burdened with obligations which later he may find to be insupportable.

We might answer in the first place simply by putting this question : When a child is to be fed, is he asked to say whether he prefers his mother's milk or his feeding-bottle ? Is he asked his advice before his family name and his Christian name are given him ? Why should not a child together with his name, rank, fortune, and physical care, receive also the religion of his family ?

In his Conferences at Notre Dame,[1] Monsabré meets this objection, first formulated by Rousseau, concerning " the radical,

[1] Lent, 1883.

inviolable and royal right to free thought," and does not hesitate to vindicate the rights of baptism and of the parents in the name of common sense. " Respect for freedom," he says, " should not be reduced to the ridiculous barbarism of depriving the unconscious child of great and substantial advantages, even though they may involve certain obligations." When it is a question of the child's good, of his health, of his spiritual qualities, of advantages connected with his nationality, of an inheritance or a legacy to be received, paternal love rightly presumes the child's consent. Still more should this be so when the incomparable privilege of the divine life is at stake.

But let us suppose that the child is given no religion and that he is left to choose it when he comes to the age of twenty. Psychologically the procedure is inadmissible; in practice it is impossible and useless.

Psychology witnesses to the need that the child has of moral truth, and of dogmatic truth which is its necessary basis. " Not by bread alone does man live." This is true at every age, and especially between the ages of ten and twenty. Besides, is it possible, in practice, for a man of twenty to review all the religions that exist ? How is he to choose ? How is he, that is, to make a rational selection ? It would need long preliminary study, manifold comparisons, a task

impossible for the great majority, both for intellectual reasons and lack of opportunity. What young man is going to choose his religion at the age of twenty? As Faguet said, at the age of twenty a man has already made his choice. He has adopted a catechism, that of his passions.

Dom Cabrol[1] thinks it possible that the Church, in view of the frequency of apostasy in these days, may come "to reserve baptism to those children alone whose family, being truly Christian, offers them serious chances of a religious education." Others would then be baptised only when they reached manhood. This is a personal suggestion of the writer quoted; the Church to-day is not so strict in the matter. She requires the permission of at least one of the parents, whatever be the form of Christianity that they profess. Except in the immediate danger of death, the priest is absolutely forbidden to baptise without the knowledge and consent of the parents.

A Bill was put before the French Chamber in 1906 to forbid the baptism of children save with the following guarantee: the consent of the parents or guardian or the mayor, given in strictly legal form. Any priest baptising without such formalities would be liable to a fine of sixteen to a thousand francs

[1] *Origines liturgiques*, p. 168.

and to imprisonment for a period from six days to three months. The Bill was not proceeded with.

The Fathers of the Church had already been confronted by the same sort of difficulty, and they always vindicated the legitimacy of the practice of baptising children, especially against certain sects who claimed that it was impossible to receive a sacrament without rational preparation for it. Catholic doctrine holds that God reduces to a minimum the collaboration required in the recipient of a sacrament. Faith is necessary; but here it is not the faith of the recipient that is required; it is supplied by the faith of the Church and by that of the godparents, who vouch for the child in undertaking the obligations involved of living a Christian life. Hence it is the duty of the godparents, and of the Church, through her priests, to watch over the child and to see that as he grows up he studies and perfects his knowledge of his faith.

* * *

The second objection in connection with infant-baptism is derived from the fact that God wills all men to be saved.

It is a dogma of faith that God efficaciously wills the salvation of all men. It is no less a dogma of the faith that baptism is necessary for salvation. Our Lord himself said to Nicodemus: "Amen, amen I say to you,

unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." That in the case of the adult the baptism of water may be supplied by something else, will be seen later. But for the child no other means is possible; only the baptism of water can raise him to the supernatural order.

Now a well-known fact presents itself, which is in apparent contradiction to the statement that God wills all men to be saved. Is there not an enormous number of unbaptised children who die before they come to the use of reason and are therefore destined irrevocably to eternal unhappiness? Would not Rousseau and Michelet seem to be right when they say: "God creates so many innocent souls on purpose to condemn them to hell?"

It should be noted in the first place that when we speak of the will of God to save all men, we do not mean a will that is to be fulfilled in spite of everything, and outside the normal course of things; in spite, for example, of culpable human negligence. God's will in this matter is efficacious, but conditional, that is, on the hypothesis that on the one hand those to whose care the children have been committed do not fail in their duty, and on the other, that no obstacle is set to the children's salvation by the normal course

of nature, and the common order instituted for the government of the world.

In other words, God wills the salvation of these children with a true will, though not with a will that extends to extraordinary measures, to the use of means which are miraculous or outside the general disposition wisely and mercifully decreed by him for his glory.

Sentiment still remains unsatisfied by this answer. But this—like everything connected with original sin—is not a matter of sentiment but of reason. Since salvation, the eternal possession of the beatific vision, is an essentially gratuitous favour, God has the right to determine the conditions of its bestowal. He decreed that baptism should be one of these conditions. If in the case of a particular category of human beings this condition is not fulfilled, is God bound to forgo this condition, or to intervene miraculously to supply the failure of second causes and to remedy the sometimes culpable opposition of free human beings? Surely not; God is not bound to forgo this condition; and if the privation of baptism brings with it the privation of the beatific vision, neither the justice nor the wisdom of God is to be blamed. Nor his love either, as we shall see later, when we explain that, though these children who die without

baptism are deprived of the beatific vision, they are not deprived of all happiness.

The answer that we have given is the unanimous answer of theologians, the classic answer of the Church. Some theologians have not been satisfied with it. While granting that in theory there is nothing to prove that God does not act in this way, they have suggested that we may hope that in practice God acts otherwise, that he uses some extra-providential means to bring even the non-baptised to the enjoyment of the beatific vision.

Take the example of a child who dies without receiving baptism, whether by reason of a sudden death, or through the neglect of his parents who deferred his baptism too long. Is it possible to conceive for such a child some other means of salvation than baptism? Some have suggested that in such a case salvation is still possible. Could not original sin be remitted, ask Gerson and St Bonaventure, by the prayer of the parents? Others have had recourse to a miraculous illumination from God, to the sufferings of the child, or to some other means used by the divine Mercy, which is unknown to us.

These theories have no greater authority than that of the theologians who defended them. There is a saint among these; but it should be remembered that they were put

forward at a time when many thought that the fate of children who die without baptism was not merely *damnatio* in the sense of a privation of the beatific vision, but an afflictive damnation, involving also the pain of sense. In point of fact, when we have explained the precise state of unbaptised children after death, it will be seen that there is less need to seek for such explanations which, though they have a certain glamour, and have never been condemned, yet have never received the approval of the Church.

At the Council of Trent the following opinion of Cardinal Cajetan was put forward, with reserve, however, and in a tentative form: "It would be prudent," he writes, "and in no way reprehensible, to give a blessing in the name of the Blessed Trinity to children in danger of death in their mothers' womb, leaving the full judgement of the matter to God. Who knows that God may not accept such a baptism, accompanied by the desire of the parents, in cases in which an excusable impossibility, and not culpable negligence, has prevented the administration of the sacrament?" The question was warmly discussed by the Fathers of the Council. The general of the Dominicans emphasised the hypothetical character of the Cardinal's thesis; the Bishop of the Canaries described it as pious; another said that it was in accordance with the will of God that all

may be saved. In the sequel, the opinion was not censured, but later Pope Pius V ordered the passage in question to be expunged from the works of the learned Cardinal.

The best answer to the objection, as we have already remarked, whether the difficulty be the real one or the sentimental one, is to be found in a clear explanation of the lot of unbaptised children. Often the best justification of a doctrine is its exact exposition. Many take umbrage at the doctrines of the Church precisely because they do not understand those doctrines fully.

Death fixes the soul in the state in which it is found at the last moment of its union with the body. If a person is living the divine life at the moment of his last breath, then this life continues ; death will not give God to one who did not possess him ; it will but render clear and direct the knowledge of God which we have by faith and grace.

If, for one reason or another, a person is not in the supernatural state at the moment of death, nothing will ever raise him to that state. Death is definitive ; with death the time of trial, of merit, of possible change, is finished. He who is not in the state of grace at that moment, never will be. Nevertheless, there is a great difference between one who is without the divine life through his own

fault and one who is inculpably deprived of it.

One who has culpably deprived himself of the divine life is " damned " in the ordinary sense of the word : he will be deprived for ever of the beatific vision and will suffer the pain of sense in proportion to his sins. He who has been deprived of the divine life through no fault of his own will suffer no afflictive punishment. It is true that since he does not possess grace, which is a title to the beatific vision, he will not enjoy it. But probably he will not in any way suffer from this privation ; the Church has not pronounced upon the point. In any case this privation will not be incompatible with a positive happiness of a lower, or natural, order.

Here is the clearly expressed opinion of St Thomas on this matter : " Original sin," he says, " does not merit the pain of sense, but only the privation of the beatific vision. Children who die unbaptised are certainly separated from God in all that concerns the union proper to heavenly glory, but this separation does not prevent them from being united to God by a participation in natural goodness, and from enjoying him by a proportionate knowledge and love. . . . The souls of these children are not deprived of the natural knowledge which belongs to disembodied souls, though they are lacking in all supernatural knowledge." The Saint

adds definitely : " The souls of these children, since they do not know that they are deprived of so great a good, feel no affliction at this privation, and possess in peace the happiness that nature can give them."[1]

A great part of the difficulty is due to the use of the words *damnatio* and *infernum*. The Council of Florence, repeating the definitions of Milevis (416) and Carthage (418), says that " the souls of those who die with actual mortal sin or with original sin only go down straightway into hell." But this does not mean that the lot of each category is the same. On the contrary, the Council excludes this, adding : " but their punishment will not be the same." While to both states there is something in common, namely, the privation of the beatific vision, the condition of each is so different that later theology, in order to avoid confusion, makes use of two different words to distinguish them: hell and limbo. Hell is a place where people suffer ; in limbo there is no suffering. On the contrary, its occupants possess a happiness proportioned to their nature ; but without the supernatural.

On this last point—the natural happiness of children in limbo—some theologians have refused to accept the view of St Thomas Aquinas. Bellarmine, for example, goes so far as to regard such a view as heretical :

[1] De Malo, v. a. 2 and 3.

" It is of faith," he writes, " that the children who die without baptism are damned, and deprived for ever, not only of the happiness of heaven, but also of natural happiness." In this Bellarmine stands alone. His error lay in not being able to reconcile the thesis of natural happiness with the texts of the Councils against the Pelagians. The Councils of Milevis and Carthage, in fact, condemn the idea that there can be—as the Pelagians held that there was—an intermediary supernatural state between the beatific vision and the intuitive vision of God. But they leave entirely open the question as to whether unbaptised children, deprived of the intuitive vision of God—which is the same thing as the beatific vision—may or may not enjoy a happiness distinct from that of the blessed, and of the natural order.

While the majority of modern theologians do not call into doubt the doctrine of St Thomas Aquinas on the subject of the natural happiness of children in limbo, a few writers are to be found, scattered here and there through history, who have believed that unbaptised children suffer positive torment. The Church has never favoured this view ; the answer of Pope Innocent III to the Archbishop of Arles is quite explicit on the point. The pontiff declares that one must distinguish between " original sin, which is contracted without personal consent,

and actual sin, which is the result of the personal consent of the will" ; and he adds that "the punishment of the first is the privation of the vision of God, and of the second the torments of everlasting hell." It could not be stated more clearly that the positive torments of hell are for actual sin only, and that original sin is punished only by the privation of the beatific vision.

A certain Gregory of Rimini, a theologian of the sixteenth century, was so severe that he was called the "torturer of children." He reproduced the theories of some of the Fathers who were carried away in the heat of controversy. Even the great Bossuet, enemy though he was of Protestantism and Jansenism, seems to have been affected by the rigorist atmosphere of his day when he interprets the Council of Florence as meaning hell properly so called in connection with unbaptised children, and holds that these little ones will be "in pain, in punishment, and in perpetual torment."

The Church had occasion to make her doctrine clear when the Jansenist synod of Pistoia reproached her with being Pelagian in favouring the opinion of "natural happiness," and with renewing the doctrine of an intermediate state between heaven and hell, a doctrine which St Augustine had opposed and the Council of Milevis rejected. The pseudo-synod denounced "as a Pelagian

fable the place in hell commonly called by the faithful the limbo of children, where the souls of those who die in original sin will be punished by the pain of loss but not by the pain of sense." In a Bull dated 28 August, 1794, Pius VI condemned this 26th proposition of the synod of Pistoia ; those who held the doctrine of the limbo of children were not to be compared with those who defended the Pelagian view of an intermediate state, as if there were several supernatural ways of seeing God and possessing him. There is one only, namely, the intuitive vision ; but this still leaves possible the existence of a natural way of possessing God. This opinion seems now to be beyond all question.

After these simple explanations, which we have reduced to the bare minimum, it will be understood, we hope, that the lot of children who die without baptism constitutes no valid objection either against the dogma of original sin, or against the Providence of God. Deprived of sanctifying grace, which alone could raise them to the supernatural order, children who die unbaptised are deprived of glory, it is true. But since the gift of glory, like the gift of grace, is entirely gratuitous, we cannot reproach God if he lays down conditions for the bestowal of it. These little ones, deprived of the beatific vision, suffer no affliction ; on the contrary, they will certainly find occasion for praising and

blessing God for the natural happiness that they enjoy.

Can we go further than this? According to the advanced opinion of some theologians, who go in search of the most lenient view, these unbaptised children will be justified by some means of which we know nothing. Some, we repeat, have ventured to affirm this. Such a view, an entirely personal one, has not been condemned; but it can hardly be said to be the accepted one.

So much from the doctrinal point of view. Our final conclusion will be a practical one. We have a grave duty of thanking God for our baptism, and of never delaying for children the grace of Christian initiation. It is a most imprudent thing to put off baptism for several days, often for the most futile reasons, such as the late arrival of a godparent, for example. The best moralists hold that to delay baptism for more than a fortnight, except for a grave reason, constitutes a serious sin.

And if among those who read these lines there is a Christian mother who has lost a child before she could have it baptised, perhaps she may find that Catholic doctrine, wisely understood, will furnish more than one motive for hope and consolation.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SALVATION OF UNBAPTISED ADULTS

THE lot of unbaptised infants constituted a formidable difficulty, though less formidable at close quarters than it appeared at first sight. The fate of adults who have died without receiving the true faith provides a further problem, upon which we must endeavour to throw a little light.

The difficulty is as follows. There are about 1,500,000,000 human beings in this world. Of these, 1,000,000,000 are pagans. Only the remaining third are baptised Christians, and these are about equally divided among Catholics and heretics. Thus at the present day, nearly two thousand years after Christ required baptism for salvation, two-thirds of the world are unbaptised. Imagine what a loss this means throughout the centuries that are past. We do not speak of those who have wilfully rejected the true religion, but of those —negative infidels, as they are called—who, never having received the preaching of the Gospel, have been, are or will be in invincible

ignorance, and therefore lacking all means of knowing and adhering to the truth.

How are we to reconcile God's will to save all men with this impossibility for so great a number of human beings of fulfilling the conditions necessary for their salvation? At this thought of so many millions of men, redeemed by the blood of Christ, who seem without hope of salvation, pious souls are troubled, and the adversaries of Catholicism raise indignant protests. In every period of history unbelievers have found in this difficulty a motive for persisting in their unbelief or of attacking the Church. When St Wulfran invited Radbod, King of the Frisians, to accept the Catholic faith, the latter objected that none could guarantee that his ancestors had been saved. When St Francis Xavier brought the gospel to the Japanese, they asked him why the light had reached them so late, and lamented the unhappy fate of their ancestors. Jean Jacques Rousseau, in the fourth book of his *Émile,* puts the following words in the mouth of the *Vicaire Savoyard*:

"Two-thirds of the human race are neither Jews nor Mohammedans nor Christians; and how many millions of men have never heard of Moses, of Jesus Christ, or of Mahomet! You talk of missionaries. Do they go into the heart of Central Africa, where no European has ever yet set foot? Do they follow the

Tartar hordes around the Mediterranean, people whom strangers never dare approach, who, far from having heard of the Pope, hardly know the Great Lama? Do they penetrate into the immense continents of America, where whole nations do not know that peoples of another world have set foot on their land? Do they go to Japan whence their behaviour has caused them to be for ever excluded, and where their predecessors are known by the present generation only as sly intriguers who came, under the veil of religious zeal, to take peaceful possession of their empire? Do they go into the harems of the princes of Asia to preach the gospel to thousands of poor slaves? What have the women of these parts done that no missionary can go to preach the faith to them? Will they all go to hell for having been recluses?"

Carried away by his eloquence, he proceeds: "Even were it true that the Gospel has been preached all over the world, what then? The day before the first missionary set foot in a place, someone certainly died, who was therefore unable to hear him. If there were only one man in the whole world to whom Jesus Christ has never been preached, the objection would be just as serious as for a quarter of the human race." [1]

[1] See also Voltaire: *Le pour et le contre*, *Œuvres completes*, t. XII, pp. 69-70.

The difficulty is an old one and was known in the time of St Augustine. It was "the strongest in the arsenal of objections that Porphyry had against the Christians." This is how the great Bishop formulates it according to a letter addressed to him by a catechumen of Carthage: "If Christ calls himself the way of salvation, the truth, and the life, if he says that the only hope of a return to lost happiness lies in him, and exists for those only who believe in him, what did men do during all the centuries that preceded his coming? Leave aside, if you will, the time that preceded the foundation of the kingdom of Latium, and suppose that humanity began at that date. In Latium the gods were honoured before the foundation of Alba Longa, and in Alba no rites were known besides those of the temples. Rome herself was for a long course of centuries without the Christian law. What happened to so many souls whom none can blame, since the Saviour in whom all must believe had not yet favoured mankind by his coming? The condition of the rest of the world was the same as that of Rome. Nor can it be said that the human race could find a remedy in the ancient law of the Jews, because the Jewish law itself is of comparatively recent origin. Moreover, at first it was in force only in a small corner of Syria, and it was only later that it reached the boundaries of Italy. Again, I ask, what are we to say of the lot of those Roman or

Latin souls, deprived of the grace of Christ, who so long delayed his coming ? " [1]

We might perhaps give as a preliminary reply that which is given by the author of the work *De Vocatione Gentium* at the beginning of his treatise. He first lays down as a principle that the supernatural is an entirely gratuitous gift, and explains that this " enables us not to be troubled by difficulties concerning the means of salvation granted, or not granted, to all men ; provided always that we do not obscure the clear by the obscure, and by insisting on opening what is closed, close what is open."

He then approaches the painful series of " whys." Why Israel alone among all the nations of the earth ? Why should the defection of Israel serve as the occasional cause of the coming of the Messias ? Why should the Jewish people, so favoured before the Messias, now after the Messias be apparently condemned to blindness ? And many other riddles which it would take a whole day even to enumerate. The author then concludes by quoting St Paul : " O the abyss of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God," adding : " Is not this the best and the most reassuring of all answers, since in final analysis it brings us back from the consideration of our short-

[1] *Ep.* 102 *ad Deo-gratias*, n. 8.

sighted views to the contemplation of the decrees of him who is at once infinite Wisdom, essential Goodness and Justice itself ? "

It is, by all means, fitting that we should be put on our guard against an over-hazardous research and the ambitious desire so to exhaust the divine knowledge as to leave no obscurity in the mystery of predestination. Still, may we not perhaps respectfully seek for a solution that comes to grips with the difficulty ?

Let us glance at some efforts which have been made in this direction.

We must first set aside certain attempted solutions, well-meant indeed, but incompatible with the truth.

Some modern Protestants, for example, try to resuscitate the thesis, hesitatingly ventured by Origen and never admitted by the Church, that those who had failed in this life to achieve salvation would be given an opportunity in another life of trial to attain their ultimate destiny. They are called " universalists."

According to Catholic doctrine he who dies in the state of mortal sin can hope for no justification after death. With our last breath we enter upon a definitive state ; the time of trial and merit is finished ; after death there is either reward or punishment.

The Church has never admitted any form of metempsychosis.

A second and no less vain attempt. By way of reaction against the teaching—for the rest, unwarranted—of those who hold that the number of the elect is small, there have appeared at various periods writers who would open heaven to all comers. Thus a Humanist of the fifteenth century, Marzio Galeotti, whose work has disappeared, or M. Cuppé, a Canon Regular of St Augustine in the time of Voltaire, who wrote a work entitled: *Heaven open to all.* This view is reduced ultimately to the thesis of Luther, who taught that works were of no avail, and that we are saved merely by the imputation of the merits of Christ. Under the pretext of giving freedom, it opens the door to immorality.

In contrast to these false solutions of the proposed objection, here is a tentative solution suggested by an eminent theologian, Cardinal Billot, which, though hardly in conformity with the traditional opinion, merits consideration. Here is the substance of it:

Many pagans who, as far as age, physical development, and even a sufficient discernment in human and temporal matters are concerned, might be thought to be adults, are in reality "children" in all that regards

the awakening of conscience and the perception of morality. There is, the learned author considers, a large category of men who, having arrived at adult age, complete the ordinary course of human existence; ordinary both as regards duration, and as regards the use of human faculties—the exercise of these, be it noted, not being impaired by any organic lesion; otherwise they would be in the category of mental deficients—and yet in spite of all this, who remain in an invincible ignorance of God from one end to the other of their earthly existence.

"We need not here enquire," writes the learned theologian, "who must bear the responsibility for the introduction of the gross superstitions of paganism; it has little to do with the present question. All we say is that, once established and consolidated, the social system of which the nations present the spectacle—where the teaching of God's truth almost entirely disappears to give place to the 'counter-education' that we know so well; where henceforth manners and customs, public institutions, official cult, the example of rulers, the traditions of ancestors, the memory of the dead, the practice of the living, and the whole apparatus of the body politic, put before our eyes only contraband divinities, which certainly have no relation with conscientious obligations—

we say that in conditions such as these, even in the heart of the most brilliant civilisations, such as that of Rome, or Antioch, or Babylon and many others, it was impossible for the great mass of the people to arrive at the knowledge of the true God and his law; that such ignorance was invincible, and brought with it all its natural consequences as regards moral responsibility and the sanctions of the future life." [1]

For the rest, the Cardinal does not intend to prejudge the question of the greater or smaller number of people in whom these conditions are verified.

"It is outside the question to determine even approximately how many men would be found in such a state of spiritual minority; still more to determine precisely places, times and persons. . . . But whether we will or not, we are confronted by this incontrovertible fact . . . the fact of peoples or numerous bodies of persons who, through the fault either of their ancestors or of their immediate teachers, have remained in the past, or still remain to-day entirely deprived not only of the benefit of revelation (whether primitive or Christian), but also of every resource of moral and religious education disposed and arranged by Providence in the purely natural order. Hence we find in such cate-

[1] *Études*, Dec. 1920, p. 535.

gories of men a state of complete spiritual indigence." [1]

This thesis of the limbo for adults has been sustained by several theologians during the history of theology, but never before with such vigour. In justification of this theory, which, be it remarked, runs counter neither to Scripture nor to Tradition, a few depositions made by missionaries may be of interest. Certain neophytes were interrogated by the priest who had converted them: "Before you became catechumens had you ever thought that there was a God?" "No." "Had you previously thought that there might be a supreme Being who has a care for us and who will punish the wicked?" "No." "But yet the pagans say: Heaven knows. Heaven punish me! What do they mean by that? Do they mean only the material heaven that we see, or do they mean the Master of heaven?" Here the neophytes hesitate. They have never thought of all this. These expressions are nothing but words to them. "When you were pagans, did you know who had made heaven and earth?" "Yes; Pan-Ku." "Whom do you mean, Pan-Ku?" "I do not know." "Is he the same as the Master of heaven?" "No."

And in support of this evidence, we have the authority of the Vicar Apostolic of

[1] *Ibid.*, 5 May, 1921, p. 261.

Nankin, Mgr. Paris, who, writing to the editor of the articles which we have quoted, says: "I am persuaded of the truth of this thesis. It has been my experience during forty years spent among pagans."

And in our own country, where the great majority are baptised, do we not find examples of men with consciences little developed, in whom there seems to be little moral education? We remember being struck during the recent war by the grossness of the mentality of some of the men, by the unspirituality of many souls, by the little idea that many had of the things of God, and we were inclined to think that when Tertullian spoke of the testimony of a naturally Christian soul, he was making an epigram rather than telling the truth. Perhaps these dark thoughts were a reflection of the darkness of the period. But they help us to realise what may happen in a pagan country, and to understand the text above quoted from the *Relations de Chine*, confirmed by the testimony of Mgr. Paris.

The answer of Cardinal Billot is interesting; it has rallied the sympathies of many critics. Nevertheless it is not the classic answer favoured by practically all theologians.

The classic answer points to the baptism of desire which supplies the place of the baptism of water. The baptism of desire is the act of perfect charity, which

includes at least the implicit desire for Christian baptism. In other words, while the normal means of entry into the supernatural life is the baptism of water, for those who through invincible ignorance are unable to avail themselves of this instrument of salvation there exists a sure means of receiving divine grace, namely, the heartfelt adherence to all that is necessary for salvation, accompanied by the firm resolve to live in conformity with the obligations, whatever they may be, which are involved.

The difference between this position and that of Billot is evident. For the partisans of the limbo of adults there is no general vocation to supernatural happiness; here it is admitted that all are called to supernatural happiness, and a special intervention of God is postulated, moving the will by divine grace, to put the subject in the necessary dispositions for the obtaining of this supernatural happiness.

The Jansenists and Protestants of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were not embarrassed with this problem; they did not fear to consign all pagans to eternal perdition. Asked the question: "Are the virtues of the philosophers true virtues, or vices?" they answered unhesitatingly: "Vices." Antoine Arnauld, in a work published in the year 1701, after his death, and entitled: *A Treatise of the necessity of*

faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, in which the question is examined whether the Pagans and Philosophers who had a knowledge of God and lived a morally good life could be saved without faith in Jesus Christ, does not hesitate to say that " the sentiment of those who claim to save pagans, even after the coming of Christ, without (explicit) faith in Christ, is worse than that of the Pelagians," and that philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and especially Diogenes and the Cynics, only deserve hell. Since the discovery of America was instrumental in reviving the discussion of the question, Arnauld speaks especially of the inhabitants of the New World. It must not be thought that these poor people can have been saved. He writes : " How is it possible to imagine that an American of two hundred years ago who had never heard of the true religion could then have avoided eternal punishment, living a good life and resembling the good pagans of whom we have spoken who, guided by the natural light of their reason, adored one only Creator of all things and lived without idolatry ? "

Further on, the implacable Jansenist continues and insists : " Only by being a Pelagian can one doubt that all these Americans, before they received the light of the Gospel, were damned." And foreseeing, no doubt, that such a merciless thesis must

arouse opposition, he goes on : " I know that this doctrine will seem hard to those carnal men who foolishly persuade themselves that the justice of God must accommodate itself to their ideas. But those who are nourished on Christian truth will easily understand that, since by the sin of the first man all men had become a mass of corruption, it is impossible for any man to be extracted therefrom save by a special grace of God, which he owes to none, and which he may therefore refuse to whomsoever he pleases."

What Arnauld claims to be Catholic doctrine is not Catholic doctrine at all. Go back as far as you will in the history of the Church and you will always find stated the possibility of salvation for those who are situated outside the normal means of justification. Can there be any doubt that the good thief was raised to the supernatural order ? Tertullian is so emphatic on the possibility of salvation with only the desire of baptism that he goes almost too far. In his fear that the faithful should apostatize after having been baptised, he counsels them to delay their baptism as long as possible. After all, he argues, since one already has grace through the desire of baptism, what does it matter ?

The other Fathers kept the doctrine that the baptism of water might be supplied by that of desire, without, however, falling into

the exaggerations of Tertullian. One of the clearest expositions of the doctrine was given by St Augustine, on the occasion of the murder of the Emperor Valentinian V. Valentinian was twenty-one and at the time of his assassination was only a catechumen. For St Augustine there was no doubt that the young emperor's desire to receive baptism was a sure guarantee of his justification in God's sight.

"I hear you lament," he said to the Christians, "that Valentinian did not receive the sacrament of baptism. But, I ask you, what more can we do than desire, what more than ask for it? He had for a long time desired to be initiated. He had often asked me to baptise him. And will he not have the grace that he desired, the grace that he asked for? As he asked, so he has received it. Grant, O holy Father, to thy servant Valentinian the gift that he has desired, being prevented by time, not by the opposition of his will. Grant him the gift of the grace that he has never refused, he who, the day before his death, refused the honours of the pagan temples, despite a pressing request. The Gentiles were there in numbers; the Senate at his feet; he feared not to displease men, in order to please thee alone, in Christ. He had thy Spirit; how can he then not have thy grace?" The Bishop repeats the objection: "But the solemn

celebration of the mysteries was lacking! Then in that case neither are the martyrs crowned, if they were only catechumens; for the crown presupposes Christian initiation. But these martyrs were purified in their blood; he was purified by his pious desire."

This comparison of the baptism of blood with the baptism of desire leads one to ask whether each of these supplies the baptism of water in the same way. In the thought of the Fathers of the Church the baptism of blood is the nobler, not only by reason of the glory inherent in martyrdom, but also by reason of a virtue which is proper to it, an efficacy comparable to that of the sacraments *ex opere operato*. This is apparent in the case of children who may be put to death for God. Their death is true martyrdom, although, as theologians put it, it has no value *ex opere operantis*. Everyone knows that the Church venerates the Holy Innocents as true martyrs of Jesus Christ.

To return to the baptism of desire. We saw a moment ago that Arnauld raises the question of faith in Christ as necessary for salvation. This is precisely the difficult point of the problem.

There can be no baptism of desire without a certain faith. But faith presupposes knowledge and consequently also the hearing of the Gospel; *fides ex auditu*. Faith presupposes preaching. And have we not

admitted that in many parts of the earth there has been as yet no such preaching? How then in many cases will faith be possible? And what is the minimum of knowledge necessary for the act of faith that justifies?

Arnauld wrongly opposes the idea that implicit faith is sufficient for salvation. "To imagine," he says, mockingly, "that the mercy of God is to extend to those good pagans who have had reason as the guide of their actions, and therefore have had an implicit faith in Jesus Christ our Saviour, would be a kind of juggling with one of the most important truths of our faith."

It is true that St Thomas requires an explicit faith in the Incarnation and the Redemption. In his time America had not been discovered, and the Angelic Doctor might well have believed that the Gospel had been preached everywhere. Thus the possibility of invincible ignorance of the essential truths of the Christian religion would not have occurred to him. The Church has never made any pronouncement on this point. Many theologians who have a large following hold that implicit faith is enough. But it must be a true faith; it must be something more than mere "good faith," and a more or less clear idea of God; it must be a real assent to the elementary truths (that God is, and is the rewarder of them that seek him) thus implicitly including the other

dogmas: the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Redemption.

But, it will be asked, if explicit faith in these dogmas is required, how will the minimum of truth necessary for salvation be brought to the knowledge of pagans? On this the Church has made no definition, and the true solution is beyond our reach. Mgr. d'Hulst enumerates four means by which the truth may arrive at men's minds: "primitive tradition, and evangelisation sufficiently established," these two being the normal means. Besides there are two others: "evangelisation forgotten, traces of which, however, remain, and finally the supernatural action of an interior grace."

Regarding the former of these last two means we may prudently hold the following: "All is not error in false religions. Perhaps even in the midst of paganism there still remains enough of supernatural truth to suffice for an act of salutary faith. In this case, such supernatural truth comes by more or less devious paths from the Christian revelation, either Jewish or primitive." [1]

Enlightened charity shines through the following words of Père L. de Grandmaison: [2]

[1] *Conférences de Notre Dame*, 1892, notes, p. 442.
[2] *La religion personnelle*, p. 21.

" Outside the one true religion (Patriarchal, Israelitic, or Catholic) there have always existed, and still exist, men who are groping after what we possess in the relative light of the faith; men who are adoring the unknown God who has been revealed to us. We know that relics of the primitive revelation are preserved among peoples and, mingled with lamentable errors, are transmitted from generation to generation. We know that these people have a soul like ours, needs, aspirations and religious desires formed on the same plan, made for the same End, that they are hungry for the same supersubstantial Bread. Hence we are not surprised to see these desires and these yearnings expressing themselves in rites and institutions, and giving rise to sentiments, which are analogous to our own. What we seek, and really find, in dogmas, sacraments, and the institutions of Christianity, they seek, without finding, by striving after the great Mercy which they have not received. Rather I should say that they have not received God's Mercy in its fulness. For we know that, just as there is no salvation for those who sin against the light, on the other hand, ' those who, suffering from an invincible ignorance of our holy religion, but, following faithfully the precepts of the natural law which is printed on their hearts, lead an honest and upright life, can, through the divine light and through grace (of

which they know nothing), acquire eternal life.' "[1]

If we supposed that paganism had retained nothing of primitive revelation, then God would supply the need in some other way, for example, by way of interior enlightenment. This led St Thomas Aquinas to declare that if an adult had been brought up entirely apart from the preaching of the Gospel, but (aided by grace) strove to live according to his conscience, God would rather send him an angel to reveal to him the truths necessary for salvation.

This hypothesis, after all sufficiently natural, was privileged to provoke the sarcasms of the *Vicaire Savoyard*, who taunts those theologians who "get out of the difficulty by kindly sending an angel to instruct anyone who had led a good life in invincible ignorance. What a brilliant invention, this angel of theirs. Not content with making us the slaves of their machinery, they want to subject God to the same necessity." The *Vicaire* no doubt quotes St Thomas from memory, and therefore misquotes him. The text in question does not say that God acts in this way. What St Thomas says is that God *would* work this miracle rather than allow such a soul to be

[1] Encyclical of Pius IX: *Quanto conficiamur*, 10 Aug, 1863.

lost. He wishes to emphasise God's sovereign goodness, which would never fail a soul that is faithful to him, and in default of normal means, would not hesitate, if necessary, to have recourse to extraordinary measures. In this there is nothing ridiculous. It is merely an emphatic way of expressing the truth.

But there is a better answer still. St Thomas argues in this way because he believes in the necessity of explicit faith for salvation. If an implicit faith is sufficient, there is no need, however sensible and however possible it may be, to have recourse to such an hypothesis.

We may now close this chapter. How is it that the points which we have tried to explain are so little understood by the general public? It is not merely because the question is a delicate one; it is chiefly, I think, because the problem is hardly ever proposed in its true terms—we are speaking, obviously, of lay-readers. Most of these seek their information in Pascal, Bossuet, and even less wisely, in Rousseau or Voltaire, because they are "classical authors." Now Pascal was a Jansenist and shows clear traces of the influence of Arnauld; Bossuet, usually so precise, on the point with which we are dealing was affected by the pessimistic atmosphere of his day, although on many other points he is the declared adversary

of the pessimists. As for Voltaire, Rousseau and the Encyclopædists, if their literary talent is incontestable, the same cannot be said of their theological knowledge. In these matters we must look for a sure guide.

In the problem with which we have been dealing you may, if you like, embrace the theory of the limbo of adults; or you may hold what we have called the common view. The Church, although far more in favour of the second, has not defined anything on the matter. In connection with the baptism of desire, you may accept two hypotheses, that of explicit faith or that of implicit faith. On this again the Church has not pronounced, though she inclines in favour of the second.

Hence there is no reason for believing that pagans are not saved. For salvation it is necessary to belong to the Church; but we must distinguish between the "body" and the "soul" of the Church. To belong to the body of the Church means to belong to it visibly; to belong to the soul of the Church means to live the interior life of grace, whether one is a visible member of the Church or not. The normal way of salvation is to belong to the body and the soul of the Church, that is, being an external member of it, to live in complete conformity with its teaching. There may be some who belong to the Church externally by practising Catholic worship, but, being in mortal sin,

are without the divine life. The converse is also true. There may be someone who, being in error but in good faith, is raised by God to the supernatural state; he may, for example, be faced by the alternative of offending God mortally or of obeying what he conceives to be God's command, and in the moment of choosing obedience be placed by God in the state of grace. According to St Thomas this option always takes place as soon as the age of reason has been reached; perhaps it may occur later, in any moral crisis from which one emerges victorious. In any case, it is certain that in all those adults who have not deliberately and with full responsibility rejected God there exists sanctifying grace. Is not this what the Church means by the phrase: *Facienti quod est in se Deus non denegat gratiam.* "To him who does all that is in his power God never refuses grace?" [1]

Hence, when it is said that outside the Church there is no salvation, the meaning is not that none can be saved outside the "body" of the Church, but that none can be saved

[1] This may be understood in a Pelagian sense, as meaning that the powers of nature can demand grace and salvation; and in this sense it is false. It must be understood to mean that "God helps those that help themselves"; or better still: "If you correspond with the grace that God gives you, you will be saved."

outside the " soul " of the Church, understanding by the soul of the Church all those who, whether belonging externally to the true Church or not, are truly obedient to God's commandments, and being providentially supplied by God with the minimum knowledge of what is necessary to believe for salvation, are able to make a salutary act of faith and are in a state of grace.

This by no means renders missionary work useless. Those who are privileged with the light of the Gospel are bound to go to the assistance of their brethren who are without the true faith and therefore lacking in so many efficacious means of sanctification. Apostolic zeal is not a virtue for the few ; it is required of every baptised person. Outside the true faith it is possible to be saved ; but how many aids are lacking ! It is the duty of those who have the faith to see that their less fortunate brethren receive the same benefits which they themselves enjoy.

Who knows ? It may be that in heaven there will be some pagans who are much nearer to God than certain lukewarm Christians of our privileged regions. The author of the *Divina Commedia* gives us a vivid picture of this possible adjustment of values at the day of judgment :

" A man is born on the banks of the river

Indus, and there he hears and reads nothing of Christ. All the desires and the actions of this man are good as far as human reason sees, and in life and in word he is without sin. He dies without baptism and without the faith. Can he be justly condemned? Is it his fault if he does not believe?" And the poet-theologian answers: "Who are you to sit on the judgement-seat and with your sight that carries but a span, to judge at a distance of a thousand miles? . . . Take heed; for many of those who are crying, "Christ! Christ! on the day of judgement will be less near to him than those who have never known him." [1]

[1] *Par.*, cant. xix, 70-81; 106-108.

CHAPTER IX

CONFIRMATION

CONFIRMATION, as the word indicates, is intended to perfect what baptism has begun ; by this sacrament the Christian receives an increase of the divine life. In baptism the soul, freed from the impure spirit, receives a first communication of the Holy Spirit with all his gifts ; in Confirmation the same Spirit is diffused more deeply still, to ensure that the Christian life be strong and vigorous. Just as all the faculties of a man exist in the child but reach their full development only at adult age, so the supernatural powers which by baptism are in the soul in germ, are developed and perfected by this second sacrament. Baptism is the birth to the life of grace ; Confirmation is entrance into adult age.

It is curious to note that we do not find the word "confirmation" used by the Fathers of the first four centuries. They speak of the "imposition of hands" (St Augustine), or "the mystic chrism" (St Cyril of Jerusalem). Leo the Great, in the fifth

century, seems to have been the first to use the word "*confirmare*"; hence the word "Confirmation."

There is one of the ceremonies of Confirmation which sets in vivid relief the superabundance of the Holy Spirit that is given to the soul. The minister of the Sacrament, the Bishop, extends his hands over those to be confirmed, and says: "Let us pray: Almighty and everlasting God, who hast deigned to regenerate these thy servants of water and the Holy Ghost, and hast granted them forgiveness of all their sins, send down upon them from on high thy Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, with his abundant gifts. Amen."

The bishop proceeds: "The spirit of wisdom and understanding. Amen."

"The spirit of counsel and fortitude. Amen."

"The spirit of knowledge and piety. Amen."

Of these gifts we shall speak later.

The matter of baptism is water, for its effect is to purify. The matter of this sacrament is oil from the olive, mingled with certain aromatic substances, and called "chrism." Much is made nowadays of the "direct method" in education; the sacraments excel as symbols to teach the profound lesson which they are intended to convey.

Oil, used in this sacrament and very commonly used in the East, has three special properties. It penetrates and impregnates the bodies with which it comes in contact; by Confirmation the Holy Spirit takes fuller possession of the soul and penetrates to the depths of it. Oil smeared over bodies that are stiff and unyielding possesses the property of making them supple and easily moved; also it heals wounds, hence the good Samaritan charitably poured oil into the wounds of the unfortunate man at Jericho. The Holy Ghost in Confirmation gives to the soul a greater mobility and responsiveness to grace, while healing all its ills. Oil is also the source of light, and especially in ancient times was used for this purpose; the story of the wise and foolish virgins in the Gospel is characteristic in this respect. Among the gifts of the Holy Ghost it will be remarked that many of them are associated with light; the gift of wisdom and understanding, the gift of knowledge, the gift of counsel. To the oil are added certain aromatic herbs, a symbol of the good odour of sanctity that the Christian should spread around him. "We are the good odour of Christ," said St Paul (2 Cor. ii 15).

The essential rite of Confirmation, together with the imposition of hands, is the anointing of the forehead of the subject with holy chrism, the following words being used:

" I sign thee with the sign of the Cross and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

Anointing occupied an important place in the Jewish religion. It was used for the consecration of priests and kings, and those who had been anointed were regarded with such respect that to single out our Blessed Lord no better title could be found than that of the " Christ," or " Messias," which means " the Anointed." In baptism we have seen that there was an anointing; there it was a secondary rite, here it is the principal. Vitally incorporated into Christ—who himself is " anointed with the divinity "—the faithful become " Christs " in their turn, participating in the anointing of Christ their Head and King, partaking also of the divinity which is in Christ in all its fulness.

The anointing of the forehead with the chrism is followed by another expressive rite, the light blow which the bishop gives to the confirmed person. The symbolism is akin to that of the light blow with the flat of the sword which was given to the recipient of the order of knighthood. This was intended to signify to the young knight that he must become the defender of all noble causes and fear nothing from the attacks of his enemies. In Confirmation the Church intends to signify to the confirmed

that he is no longer merely a child of God; he must now also be a soldier of Christ. The chief effect of the sacrament is to give to the baptised person the strength necessary for combat, and for the conflicts of the soul.

Baptism introduces us into the world of salvation, but it does not undo the fact that in virtue of our descent from Adam, we once belonged to the world of the Fall. Hence, there are two causes that may contribute to our failure to achieve our destiny, one within us, concupiscence, the other without, the devil. To take the last first, it is obvious that the devil, though deprived of his rights over the child at the moment of baptism, does not despair of regaining what has been taken from him. During the early years of the child's life the devil can do nothing; the child is as incapable of sinning as he is of meriting, since he has not the use of his reason and freedom. But when once the age of discretion has come, when once the child is able to choose between good and evil, then temptation can assail him, and the life of conflict begins. Although a religious atmosphere and a sound education may do much to make resistance successful, none can say that he is immune from temptation. The more so that in every heart there is this formidable concupiscence of which we have spoken, and which is, so

to speak, the devil's ally within the walls of the city. Is it not particularly fitting that, at the moment when life is opening out before us, when our senses are awakening, there should be a special sacrament to give us the strength that will be necessary for us in our conflict with temptation ?

On the day of his baptism the Christian promised to resist evil and to remain faithful to Christ. To keep that promise he needs strength. It is Confirmation that gives him the strength that he needs.

He needs strength to confirm his faith. Our beliefs should not be like so much luggage that we are carrying in our hands ; they should be something that we live interiorly, and from which all powers of living flow. Our beliefs must be convictions, otherwise they are a dead letter. Confirmation gives us the energy to penetrate into these divine truths and to combat the two causes that kill or adulterate the faith : passivity and the passions. The first enemy of faith is a passive attitude of mind. In everything else we make progress, whereas in our religious knowledge we too often remain stationary, if indeed we do not lose ground. The second enemy is the passions. " Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." Reversing the beatitude, we may say : " Woe to the impure, for they not do see, or they have ceased to see." Confirmation helps

the Christian to resist the unhealthy desires of the flesh and the senses.

It is a good thing to have convictions. But more is needed; we must live according to these convictions. If it requires strength to believe, it needs still greater energy to practise what one believes. How many there are that see what they ought to do, and do it not. Confirmation is intended to help the Christian to have the courage of his convictions, to practise the self-denial necessary in order to obey God at least in grave matters.

The Christian should be able to do more than live according to his beliefs; he should be able eventually to defend them, he should desire to extend them, to help others to share them. To spread one's faith, to help others to benefit by it, needs the sacrifice of money, time, comfort, and tranquillity. Confirmation has much to do with the birth of apostolic zeal in a soul. The defence of the faith may often cost dear, as we have seen recently in the case of the many martyrs of Mexico. Here too Confirmation gives the necessary courage. The missionaries in Japan in the eighteenth century said that they had never seen the Sacrament of Confirmation received with such devotion as by the Christians of Japan. Is not this, perhaps, the reason why Japan provided two millions of martyrs during that century?

It has been said that the grace of baptism is a grace of martyrdom. He who is a part of Christ must henceforth bear witness (for this is the literal meaning of the word martyr) to the fact that he belongs to his Master. During the Passion, when Pilate asked Christ to tell him who he was, Christ, well knowing what the assertion would cost him, answered: "I am come into the world to bear testimony to the truth." When Christ offered his sacrifice he was the martyr, the witness *par excellence*. The Christian, the member of Christ, called for the first time by Baptism, a second time by Confirmation, to bear witness to the truth of the Gospel, must fear nothing during his whole life, even though the circumstances may require the shedding of his blood.

Before his Passion Christ had taken care to warn his Apostles: "Look to yourselves; For they shall deliver you up to councils, and in the synagogues you shall be beaten, and you shall stand before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony unto them" (Mark xiii 9). On Holy Saturday our Lord spoke even more definitely: "When the Paraclete cometh, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceedeth from the Father, he shall give testimony of me; and you shall give testimony" (John xv 26-27). And later, before his ascension: "And I send the promise of my Father unto

you; but stay you in the city until you be endued with power from on high" (Luke xxiv 49). "You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts i 8).

St Thérèse of the Infant Jesus well understood the importance of Confirmation: "A short time after my first Communion," she writes, "I went again into retreat for my Confirmation. I had very carefully prepared myself for the coming of the Holy Spirit. I could not understand why so little attention was often paid to this sacrament of love. . . . How happy my soul was! Like the Apostles I happily awaited the promised Comforter, I rejoiced that soon I should be a perfect Christian, and have eternally marked upon my forehead the mysterious cross of this ineffable sacrament. On that day I received the strength to suffer, a strength which I much needed, for the martyrdom of my soul was soon to begin."

If the gift of strength is the chief gift of Confirmation, it is not the only one. The text of the ritual enumerates seven, quoting a passage of Isaias dealing with the riches that the Messiah and Redeemer would be called to possess: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root. And the

spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him ; the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and of piety. And he shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord " (Is. xi 1-3). The Christian who has become a member of Christ at baptism, at Confirmation will be made to partake even more fully of the supernatural treasures of his Divine Head.

Of these gifts the first four belong to the intellect, the other three to the will. Many authors devote time to describing the nature and the properties of each, showing how they differ from the virtues and how they differ from one another. We shall not dwell upon this. All the masters of the spiritual life are agreed that the " gifts " are qualities, powers, more perfect than the infused virtues, and are intended to complete and, so to speak, to crown the supernatural resources which grace puts at our disposal to bring us to God.

We have three kinds of resources for well-doing. First of all we have our natural virtues, and these are by no means to be despised. Then there are the infused virtues, supernatural habits infused into us at baptism, which facilitate our supernatural actions. They are divided into two kinds, the theological (faith, hope, and charity) and the moral virtues. Finally, there are the

gifts, which make it easy for us to serve God in ordinary matters, but also ensure that in the midst of the greatest difficulties, and at the cost even of heroic sacrifice, we shall be faithful to God's commands.

The grace proper to Confirmation is that it "adds to the initial grace of Baptism a grace of fulness which fortifies the grace already received, disposing the soul to receive the motions of God, and to correspond with them faithfully. The Holy Ghost does in us what he did at Pentecost in the Church and for the Church. Pentecost is the confirmation of the Church; our Confirmation is our Pentecost."[1]

The descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles was accompanied by miraculous manifestations. The descent of the Holy Ghost in confirmation leaves no external trace. The original outpouring of the Spirit manifested itself by wonderful effects, called *carismata*, such as the gift of tongues, the power of healing the sick, etc., because the infant Church needed an exceptional impulse to enable it to make its way among men.

There is now not the same reason for these external effects.

St Francis of Sales, Cardinal Manning, Mgr. Landrieux, and Père de Smedt are

[1] Mgr. Landrieux: *Le Divin Méconnu*, pp. 92-93.

unanimous, when they classify the gifts of the Holy Ghost, in beginning their study from the last of them, and so rising at length to the gift which in the text of Isaias is mentioned in the first place ; and perhaps they are right : " The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Beginning, then, with the gift of Fear (or rather of respect and submission to the will of God), we have in succession the gift of Fortitude, of which we have spoken, Piety, or an habitual disposition to the filial love of God, Counsel, which makes us act always in a spirit of faith and dependence upon God, Knowledge and Understanding, by which we are enabled to judge things human and divine at their just values, to come finally to the gift of Wisdom which is the experimental knowledge of God.

The sacrament of Confirmation, while it gives to us many wonderful helps for a truly Christian life and for sanctity, requires in him who has received it and is not too ignorant to recognise his incomparable dignity, a proper and saintly pride.

When the sacrament is administered, the recipient is reminded that on the day of his baptism he became a living tabernacle of the Most High. The Bishop says the following prayer : " May God dwell in thy heart and make it his temple in which he will manifest his glory." He who has been confirmed should always bear in mind this great

honour, and be a credit to the Head whose soldier he is.

Cowardice and human respect are nonsensical. "Shame," says Péguy, "upon those who are ashamed. It is not a question of believing or not believing; it is a question of knowing what is the most frequent cause of the loss of the faith. No cause can be more shameful than shame—and fear. And of all fears the most shameful is certainly the fear of ridicule, the fear of being taken for a fool. One may believe, or one may not believe. But shame upon him who would deny his God to avoid being made a mark for witticisms. I have in mind the poor timorous wretch who looks fearfully on every side to be sure that there is not some high personage who has laughed at him, at his faith, at his God. Shame upon the ashamed. Shame implies a cowardice that has nothing to fall back upon. Shame upon those who are ashamed!"

It was Paul Lamache, I think, one of the companions of Ozanam, who used to say: "Sometimes I am so proud of being a Catholic that I am afraid that I shall be obliged to tell it in confession."

Like Baptism—and also Holy Orders—Confirmation can be received but once. These three sacraments confer a character, that is, they impress upon those who receive

them a spiritual mark which can never be effaced. To authenticate a document, to give it official value and inviolability, a seal is impressed upon it. In the old days every man employed in the service of a master was marked with a special sign which signified to whom he belonged. In fact, the words *inscriptus, litteratus,* came to mean a slave. It was probably this that St Paul had in mind when he wrote : " From henceforth let no man be troublesome to me; for I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus in my body " (Gal. vi 17). By these words (see also Rom. i 1), he wished to signify that he belonged entirely to Christ, that he was bound to him by the closest ties, and that he had always the right to claim the inviolability of his person and the protection of his Master.

Another comparison may serve. When soldiers were enrolled in the Roman army they were marked with a special sign ; as soon as they had taken the oath of fidelity they were branded on the forehead with an X as a sign that they were officially legionaries.

Some of the Fathers of the Church have compared this X marked on the forehead of the Roman soldier—a letter which is the Greek initial of the name of Christ—with the sign of the Cross which is made upon the forehead of the Christian. In fact when the Bishop made the sign of the Cross on the

neophyte, he, as chief of the Christian community, intended to take possession of him in the name of Christ. Marked with this character, bearing the seal of alliance between himself and Christ, the neophyte henceforth carried the sign of his dedication to Christ, the mark of his complete consecration. By this same mark he is enrolled officially in the army of the Church militant as a soldier of Christ the King, sure of the help of his Divine Head, and obliged to keep unfalteringly his oath of fidelity.

Now that we have recalled these historical and symbolical notions let us see in what consists the special mark of each of the characteristic sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders.

Baptism, we have seen, unites the Christian vitally to Christ. But who is Christ? Christ is the only person who is able to offer to God a glory which is worthy of God. Becoming man, while still remaining God, he became able to offer something to God; and this oblation would have in the eyes of the Father an infinite value. Such is the unique, pre-eminent priesthood of Christ.

But to this priesthood, to this incomparable power of offering, we are intimately united. Our baptism unites us to him who is the great High-priest; henceforth we are able, like the Son with whom we now form one,

to offer to the Father a homage which is worthy of the Father.

This, we think, is the most comprehensive and most profound explanation of what constitutes the character in Baptism: the marvellous participation in the unique and sovereign Priesthood of Christ, by the very fact that we become "other Christs."

The Church has reserved the title of priest to designate only those who have the power of consecrating. But we must not forget that the baptised person is in a manner a "priest." St Peter, the first Pope, did not hesitate to use the word "priesthood" to signify the great privilege that is granted to everyone who becomes a member of Christ, the sovereign High-priest. And for him this priesthood is so sublime that he does not fear to call it "royal" (1 Pet. ii 9; cf. Apoc. i 6). The character of baptism is the invisible seal of this spiritual and royal priesthood.

Confirmation, whose object is to strengthen the grace of baptism, sets this character in clearer relief. The character of confirmation therefore is a deeper and clearer impression of the baptismal priesthood. And if it should happen that later the sacrament of Holy Orders is received, then the power of offering received in baptism and reaffirmed in confirmation receives a magnificent crown.

In baptism the character made the Christian a member of Christ; in confirmation, the character made him a soldier of Christ; sacerdotal ordination makes him a minister of Christ. This is the most complete and perfect union with Christ the Divine Priest.

Henceforth the power of offering, instead of being individual and private, becomes public, communal, and official. Now this "other Christ," a part of the sovereign Priest, is qualified to exercise the power of offering in the name of his brethren. Hitherto his priesthood, royal indeed, was simply spiritual; now it is also ministerial, sacramental. But it is well to remember that while there is this obvious and considerable difference between the baptismal priesthood and the priesthood of Holy Orders, yet there is a greater affinity than many are aware. The priesthood of Holy Orders is not something which is planted in the priest without something in which to take root. It is the full development of a power the root of which exists already. It is the sublime mission—a mission given neither by Baptism nor by Confirmation, but by Holy Orders alone—of being able to consecrate; it is the power to render Jesus our Saviour present on the altar in order to offer him to the Father, in virtue of the ministry committed to priests alone: "Do this in commemoration of me."

CONCLUSION

MAY these pages give light, conviction, and warmth. May they give to those who remain faithful to their Baptism an incentive to follow to the uttermost their divine and Christlike vocation. To those who believe but are negligent in practice may they provide a convincing stimulus not to live illogically. To those who do not believe, may they present in a light which I pray God may render every day clearer and clearer, the deep beauty of the Catholic life, properly understood.

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